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J. Steiner Esqre.

With the Author's kind regards.

Christmas
1864

[by Anne Beale]

GLADYS, THE REAPER.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"SIMPLICITY AND FASCINATION."

". . . . standing like Ruth amid the alien corn."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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GLADYS, THE REAPER.

CHAPTER I.

THE FARMER'S WIFE.

It is an evening in June, and the skies that have been weeping of late, owing to some calamity best known to themselves, have suddenly dried their eyes, and called up a smile to enliven their gloomy countenances. The farmers, who have been shaking their heads at sight of the unmown grass, and predicting a bad hay-harvest, are beginning to brighten up with the weather, and to consult upon the propriety of mowing to-morrow. The barometer is gently tapped by many a sturdy hand, and the result is favourable; so that there are good

prospects of a few weeks sunshine to atone for the late clouds.

Sunshine! how gracious it is just now! Down yonder in the west, that ancient of days, the sun, throws around him his evening glory, and right royally he does it. The rain-covered meadows glow beneath it, like so many lakes—the river looks up rejoicing, and the distant mountains are wrapped in garments dyed in the old king's own regal colours. The woods look as smooth and glossy as the braided locks of maidens prepared for conquests; and the roads and paths that wind here and there amongst the trees, are as gay as little streamlets in the sun's reflected light.

Suddenly a rainbow leaps, as it were, out of the river, and spans with its mighty arch the country scene before us.

> "A rainbow at night
> Is the shepherd's delight;"

so the proverbially-grumbling farmers will have another prognostic to clear their countenances.

Perchance the worthy man who inhabits the

farm we have just reached, may be congratulating himself upon it, as he jogs home from market this Saturday evening. If he could look upon his homestead with our eyes, I feel sure he would cease to despond. How cheerily the wide slated roof gleams forth from amongst the trees, and returns the warm glance of the sun with one almost as warm, albeit proceeding from a very moist eye-lid! How gladly the white smoke arises once more, spirally, from the large chimneys, after having been so long depressed by the heavy atmosphere! and how the massive ivy that covers the gable-end, responds to the songs of the birds that warble their evening gladness amongst its gleaming leaves! The face of the dwelling is as cheerful as are the sun, river, mountains and meads, that it looks down upon from its slight elevation. Every leaf of the vine and pyrus-japonica that covers its front, is bedecked with a diamond; and the roses, laburnums, nasturciums, and other gay flowers in the garden, drop jewels more freely than the maiden in the fairy tale, as they glisten beneath the rainbow.

This is what we see from the hawthorn-lane

below the house ; but walking up into the high-road at the back, the scene changes, and just as our sympathies with beautiful nature were called forth below, so are they instantaneously assailed by our fellow creatures above.

We come to the substantial gate that is the entrance to the pretty farm, and a curious and a motley group is there. We see such groups almost daily, here in Carmarthenshire ; but as all the counties of England and Wales are not thoroughfares for the Irish from their country to England, we will describe these poor people as graphically as we can. There is evidently a consultation going on amongst them, and the general attention is directed to one individual of their party.

This is a young girl of some seventeen or eighteen years of age. She is seated on the ground, and leans her back against the stone wall that flanks the substantial gate afore-mentioned. To judge from her general appearance, she can scarcely belong to the ragged set that surround her, for there is an attempt at neatness and cleanliness in her attire, though it is poor enough, that the rest cannot boast of.

She wears a cotton gown, shawl, straw bonnet and shoes and stockings, which were once respectable, and seem to have been originally intended for her. True, they are all worn and shabby looking. The gown is faded, the bonnet very brown, and the shoes have holes in them; but they indicate a mind, or station, at least a degree above those of her companions. Her head is so inclined upon her breast, that it is difficult to see more than a pale face underneath the bonnet; but a pair of thin white hands that rest listlessly upon her lap, still tend to induce the notion that the girl cannot quite belong to the wild-looking company with which she is mixed up.

Right in front of her, and looking alternately from her to a man to whom she is talking, stands a middle-aged woman of good-natured but terrified aspect. A checked and ragged handkerchief confines her black, rough hair—a torn red cloak covers a portion of her body, and a curious collection of rags and tatters makes a vain effort to shelter the rest. In the large hood of the red cloak, a hardy-looking infant is tied up, its little head and hand being

alone visible, which are engaged in munching and holding a crust of bread. At the feet of the woman are sundry articles, amongst which a bundle of rags, an iron pot, and a tin saucepan, are the most conspicuous. The man to whom she is talking is a tall, gaunt specimen of Irish poverty and famine. He holds a rake and pitch-fork in his hand, and leans upon them for support. Gazing into his face is a rough, surly-looking youth, who seems cordially to agree with all that he says.

Leaning against the wall that flanks the gate on the side opposite that which supports the girl, are another man and woman, who cast from time to time pitying glances at the pale face beneath the straw bonnet. These are as raggedly picturesque in their attire as the rest —a short red petticoat, a blanket substituted for a shawl, and a bundle on the back, distinguish the female ; a long great coat, and short trousers, the male. They are deep in conversation upon the common theme. A young man of more stalwart figure stands beside the girl, and failing to attract her attention, kneels down on one knee and speaks low

to her. A little boy is seated at her feet, alternately stroking her hands, and stirring up a small puddle of water with a short stick. Two other children are engaged, at a little distance, in making a lean cur beg for a mouthful of bread, which the generous urchins would evidently rather share with the dog than eat alone.

The one prevailing feature of the party is rags, and how they hold together no tongue can tell.

At last there is a general movement, as well as general clamour of voices, and much gesticulation. All, old and young, with the exception of the girl, gather round the woman in the red cloak, and seem to be urging her to do something that she does not like to do. They point to the girl, and the appeal is not in vain.

The woman moves slowly and somewhat sulkily towards one of the boys, takes him by the hand, and returning to the gate, opens it, and walks down the good broad road that leads to the farm, the boy trotting by her side. We watch the bright red cloak till it disappears amongst the trees that surround the house; and turn again to wonder what can be the

matter with the girl. She neither moves nor speaks, although her kindly companions in turn endeavour to attract her attention.

In the course of a few minutes, the red cloak is again seen coming up the road, closely followed by another figure. We soon hear sounds of earnest pleading, in a broad Irish brogue, from our friend of the red cloak. As they approach the gate, we hear distinctly the words,

"It's all thrue, my leddy—as thrue as the blessed gospel. I'm afeerd she's dyin' if yer honour's glory won't lend us a hand."

"I don't know how to believe you, my good woman, for some of you come every week and deceive me with all kinds of stories."

"An' she's Welsh, yer honour. She's come to find out her friends, my leddy! God bless ye, ye've a kind eye, and a gintle voice."

Red cloak spoke the truth. The woman who is now added to the group, has truly "a kind eye and a gintle voice." She is short and small of form, of middle age and matronly appearance; neatly and even handsomely dressed, as becomes the mistress of one of the

largest and wealthiest farms of a country where large farms are rare. She has a handsome, placid face, and looks as if the world had moved on quietly and happily, ever since she had been on its surface. Her dark eyes, that must once have been bright and piercing, are softened down to gentleness by the quieting hand of time; and the black hair is slightly streaked with white, by the same unsparing fingers. But for this, age would seem to have little to do with the comely dame who is now bending her neatly-attired head before the shabby looking girl against the wall.

"What is the matter with you, my poor girl?" says the "gintle voice."

These kind words have a power that the equally kind ones of the rough friends around had not. The brown straw bonnet is raised from the breast, and we perceive that the girl is neither dead nor sleeping. We perceive something more—a pair of the most painfully melancholy, and beautiful violet eyes that we ever looked into, which are languidly uplifted to the farm-lady. With the words, "I am very tired, ma'am," the eyes reclose, and we see long

black fringes of soft hair rest upon the pale, thin cheek. The ready tear of compassion springs to the matron's eyes, as she stoops still lower to feel the pulse in the wan hand.

"What is the matter with her?" she inquires, turning to the bystanders.

"'Tis tiert all out she is, my leddy. We come by say from Watherford to Milford, and thin, yer honour, we come on foot al trough Pembrokeshire, and County Carmarthin, and now she's jist kilt."

"But what is she going to do? Why do you come away from Ireland at all?"

"Och, my leddy, shure we're starvin' there. And we jist come to luk for the work in the harvest, an' we're goin' to Herefordshire to git it. An' plaase yer honour's glory, she come wid us to this counthry to luk for her mother's relations that's Welsh, my leddy, small blame to thim, seein' her mother married an Irishman, and come to live in our counthry."

"I will give you a night's lodging, and that is all I can do for you," says the gentle mistress of the farm.

"The Lord bless ye, my leddy, the holy

angels keep ye, the blessed Vargin and all the saints—"

"Oh, hush! hush!" exclaims the good woman, highly shocked. "Help the poor girl, and come with me."

The woman went towards the girl, and trying to assist her to rise, said,

"Now, Gladys, asthore! An' shure, my leddy, she's a thrue Welsh name. I'll help ye, my darlin', there! Och! an it's betther she is already, as soon as she heerd of a night's lodgin."

The young man who was kneeling by the girl just now, goes to her other side, and succeeds, in supporting her by putting his arm round her waist, whilst the woman holds her by one arm; and thus they follow the good mistress of the farm, followed in their turn by the rest of the party.

They move slowly down the road, underneath the fine oak and ash trees that shelter the back of the farm, until they reach a large farm-yard, wherein some thirty fine cows, of Welsh, English, and Alderney breed, are yielding their rich milk at the hands of some

three or four rough-looking men and women who are kneeling down to get it.

"Come here, Tom," cries the mistress, authoritatively.

Tom gives a knowing wink to the nearest girl, mutters, "Irish again," and goes to his mistress.

"See if there is good, clean straw spread in the barn, Tom, and make haste."

Tom goes to a large building outside the farm-yard, whither his mistress and the rest follow him.

"Plenty of straw, ma'am, good enough for such folk," says Tom.

"Spread some more, and shut the window in the loft."

This is done in a slow grumbling way.

The barn is a large, clean, airy building, that must look like a palace to these ragged, way-worn people.

"Now you may sleep here to-night, provided you go off early and quietly to-morrow morning. There is a good pump down below, where you can get water to wash yourselves, and at eight o'clock I shall lock the barn door; my husband

always insists upon that." Thus speaks the mistress.

"Heaven bless his honour, we're all honest. We wouldn't harm a hair of your blessed heads. We heerd o' ye many a time, and o' the good lodgin' and supper—the sun shine upon ye—ye give to the poor Irish on their thravels." Thus answers the Irishwoman.

"You tell one another then! And this is why we have more calls than anyone else!"

"The Lord love ye, and why wouldn't we? 'Tis the good as always gets the blessin."

Whilst this little conversation is going on, the girl, Gladys, is laid upon the shawl-blanket of the woman who wears that singular attire, and a pillow, half rags, half straw, is contrived for her head. The bonnet is taken off to increase her comfort, and, as her head falls languidly back upon the rough pillow, a wan, thin face is disclosed, that, from the regular outline of the profile, must be pretty, under happier circumstances, and is interesting.

Whilst the guests prepare to make themselves comfortable in different ways, the kindly farm-lady leaves them, amid many and en-

thusiastic blessings, and returns to the farm-house.

In less than half an hour she reappears, followed by a female servant, both carrying tokens of a true hospitality that expects no return. She goes towards the poor girl with a small basin of good broth, and a plate of toasted bread, such as might tempt the palate of a more dainty invalid; whilst the servant places a can of real Welsh broth, smelling strongly of the country emblem, the leek, in the midst of the hungry crew who are scattered over the barn. To this she adds various scraps of coarse bread and hard cheese, which she draws from a capacious apron, and evidently considers too good for the luckless vagabonds before her. She is soon, however, as much interested as her mistress in the sick girl to whom the latter is administering the warm restorative. Spoonful after spoonful is applied to her lips, and greedily swallowed, though with evident effort. The toasted bread is soaked in a portion of the broth, and is also devoured as speedily as offered, with an avidity made still more painful by the difficulty of

swallowing, occasioned by some obstruction in the throat.

"God help you, poor girl," says the good Samaritan, as she puts the last mouthful to the lips of the patient.

The eyes unclose, and a tear falls upon the wan cheek, as a murmured, "thank you, my lady," is faintly heard.

The "lady" turns away with a heavy sigh, whilst the servant begins to arrange the blanket-shawl and rags more comfortably, and finally takes off her large linsey-woolsey apron to make a softer resting-place for the head and neck of the girl. The grateful friends that stand around, now bless the servant as zealously as they blessed her mistress, and if she understood the language in which the warm Irish hearts express their gratitude, she would probably wonder who "the Vargin and all the holy saints and angels" are, that are invoked for her sake.

Again the farm-lady goes away; and returns bearing a small bottle of medicine, that she bids the red-cloaked woman give the sick girl in about an hour. She then leaves her patient

and motley guests to their supper and night's repose, followed by such prayers as the poor alone know how to utter, and, perhaps, how to feel.

CHAPTER II.

THE FARMER.

THE rainbow was a true prophet; the sun that went down so gloriously last night amid the half-dried tears of a lately weeping earth, has arisen this morning with a resolution to dry up all the remaining tears, and to make the Sabbath as it should be—a day of rejoicing. Sunrise amongst the hills and valleys! I wish we all saw it oftener. Not only would the glorious spectacle make us wiser and better, but the early rising would be not only conducive to health and good spirits, but to the addition of a vast amount of time to the waking and working hours of our very short life.

All nature arouses herself by degrees, as the

great source of light rises from his couch, curtained with rose and daffodil-coloured drapery. As these gorgeous curtains spread east and west, and he takes his morning bath in the clouds and vapours, up rises the proud monarch of the farm-yard, as if in bold rivalry, outspreads his fine plumage in emulation of the rose and daffodil curtains, and bids him welcome with a voice so loud and shrill, that he must almost hear it from his domed throne above. More arbitrary in his kingdom than the sun in his, this grand Turk insists on arousing all his subjects; and the sleepy inmates of his harem withdraw their heads from beneath their wings, and, one by one, begin to smooth their feathers, and to descend lazily from their dormitories. A faint twittering is heard amongst the ivy-leaves, in answer to "the cock's shrill clarion;" and in a few seconds, the little sleepers amongst the oak and ash trees take it up, and by the time the sun has come out of his bath, and the cock has ceased crowing, there is a full chorus of heart-stirring minstrelsy round about the quiet farm. Down below in the meadow, the cattle begin

to shake off the dew-drops from their hides, and to send forth a plaintive low as they slowly seek their early breakfast in the spangled grass, or by the steaming river. Away among the hills, the faint bleat of the sheep echoes from heath to heath, whilst their white fleeces dot the plains. Over the face of happy nature creeps a glow that seems to come from the heart, and to make her look up rejoicing, to the sun as part of herself, and yet a type of the Great Creator.

But whilst this Sabbath morning hymn thus rises, betimes, to the throne of Him who sits beyond the sunbeams, tired man sleeps on. The farmer's household is still slumbering, and after a week of hard labour, taking an additional hour's repose on that day which was graciously appointed as a day of rest. Scarcely can the sun peep in through the drawn curtains and shutters of the windows, and no song of birds, or low of cows, seems, as yet, to have reached the closed ears of the sleepers. Master and men alike obtain the bounteous gift of sleep so often denied to the less laborious rich.

We are wrong in supposing that all are slumbering in the farm-house. Quietly the mistress steps out of the back door which she has noiselessly opened, as if afraid of disturbing her household. As the brisk little figure moves across the farm-yard, it is instantly surrounded by a flock of poultry that seem intuitively to expect an alms at her hand, as do the poor Irish who haunt her dwelling. But she has nothing to give them thus early in the morning, and scarcely heeds their cackling and crowing. The fierce house-dog, however, will be noticed, as bounding through the poultry, and knocking down one luckless hen, he jumps upon his mistress and almost oversets her also. The "down Lion, down," of the "gintle voice," serves only to make him more demonstrative, as he gambols roughly on her path as she proceeds towards the barn.

Mrs. Prothero—such is the name of our farm-lady—had been haunted all night long by visions of the poor Irish girl. She had not slept as soundly as the other members of her family, because there was a fellow-creature

suffering within her little circle. Although she had lived nearly fifty years in the world, and had been variously cheated and imposed upon by beggars of all kinds, her heart was still open to "melting charity," and liable to be again and again deceived. As she stopped before the barn-door with the key in her hand, Lion began a low growl. He could never get over his antipathy to Irish beggars, and all his mistress's influence was necessary to prevent the growl becoming a bark. She put her ear to the door and listened, but no sound disturbed the stillness within. She knocked gently, but there was no answer. At last she thought she heard a feeble voice say something which she interpreted into "come in," and she turned the key in the lock of the door and opened the top half of it. She looked in, and saw all her mendicant guests in profound repose, excepting the girl Gladys, who endeavoured to rise as she perceived the kindly face, but fell back again immediately. She unclosed the other half of the door, and carefully excluding Lion, by shutting it after her, walked softly across the barn to the rough

couch on which Gladys lay. She appeared to be in the same state of exhaustion as on the previous night; and if she had noticed Mrs. Prothero at all, the transient effort was over, and she remained with closed eyes and listless form, whilst the good woman looked at her and felt her pulse. Then her lips moved slightly, as if wishing to say something, but emitted no sound. What was to be done for one in such a helpless state? Mrs. Prothero's kind heart sank within her.

As she did not like to disturb the weary wretches, who were sleeping so soundly in their rags amongst the hay and straw, she prepared to leave the barn; but as she moved away, the girl's eyes unclosed, and glanced dimly at her through a film of tears. Nourishment seemed the only remedy that presented itself to her mind. She smiled kindly at the girl, murmured, "I will come again," and went through the sleepers towards the door, pausing, however, to look at the peaceful face of the baby, as it lay on its mother's arm, covered with the old red cloak.

She returned to the house, and went to the

clean, large dairy, where she took a cup of the last night's milk, already covered with rich cream, from a pan, and went with it to the back kitchen, where was a fire, kept up all night by means of the hard Welsh coal, and heat-diffusing balls. She warmed the milk, procured a piece of fine white bread, and once more returned to the barn.

She administered these remedies to her patient, who swallowed them with the same avidity and difficulty as she had done the broth. She fancied she again heard the words, "God bless you, my lady," but they were so faint that she was not sure.

Again she threaded her way amongst the sleepers, and left the barn. She went into her garden, and walked for a few moments amongst the flowers, as if for counsel. The bees were beginning to hum about the hives, and the butterflies to flit amongst the flowers. She stood and looked at the beautiful scene before her—the woods, hills, river—and above, the morning sun and offered up a prayer and thanksgiving to the Giver of all good things. Her thoughtful face brightened into a smile, and her

walk became more brisk as she left her garden, and went again into the farm-yard.

The cow-man was bringing up the cows to be milked, and he looked astonished as he greeted his mistress. So did the two ruddy, dishevelled farm maidens, who had barely turned out of their beds to milk the cows, and had paid small attention either to their toilet or ablutions.

The house was perfectly quiet as she entered it, and she crept up-stairs, and into her bed-room very softly, for fear of disturbing any one.

"Where in the world have you been, my dear?" greeted her, in a gruff voice from amongst the bed-clothes, that covered a large, old-fashioned bed, hung with chintz curtains.

"Go to sleep and don't trouble, Davy, *bach*,"* quietly replied the brisk little dame.

"Go to sleep, indeed! Easier said than done, when one wakes up in a fright, and finds you gone, nobody knows where. Now, where *have* you been? You 'ont let one sleep, even of a Sunday morning."

* A Welsh term of endearment, equivalent to 'dear,' pronounced like the German.

"Well, now, don't get into a passion, my dear—I mean, don't be angry."

"What have I to be angry about when I don't know what you've been doing?"

This was said in an injured tone, as if the heart under the bed-clothes were softer than the voice.

"I didn't mean to say you were angry, only I thought—"

"You thought what?"

"Well, my dear, I have only just been across to the barn."

This was uttered timidly and pleadingly, and as if our good housewife knew she had been doing wrong.

Suddenly, a large red face started up from amongst the bed-clothes, ornamented with a peculiarly-shaped white cap and tassel.

"Now, you haven't been after them Irishers again?" exclaimed the owner of the red face. "The idle vagabonds! I vow to goodness that all our money, and food, and clothing, too, I believe, go to feed a set of good-for-nothing, ragged rascals."

"Hush, Davy! Remember they are God's creatures, and this is Sunday,"

"I don't know that. And if it's Sunday, why mayn't I sleep in peace?"

"Indeed, I am very sorry. But that poor girl I told you of is so ill!"

"Hang the poor girl! Then send her to the workhouse, and they'll give her a lift home."

"But if she has no home?"

"Then let her go to her parish."

"But they don't seem to have any parishes in Ireland."

"No parishes! I suppose that's the geography the vagabonds teach you? Well, you pay dear enough for your lessons. But I tell you what, Mary, you just go and tell 'em all to decamp this minute."

"But the girl is too weak and ill."

"Then send her to the Union, I say, and they are bound to forward her."

"But a Sunday! and the House miles away! Oh, Davy, we really cannot do it to-day!"

"What with the Irish, and one charity and another, I declare there's no peace in life! Name o' goodness, 'ooman, why do you harbour

such folk? If the girl's too ill to go on with her gang, they must leave her at the Union, or else get the overseers to send for her."

"Will you just go and look at her?"

"No, I 'ont, and that's plain speaking!"

Here the red face, and white night-cap and tassel, suddenly disappeared amongst the bedclothes.

Mrs. Prothero considered a few minutes, and again left the room, and went to the barn. Here, all was confusion and consultation. They had tried to help Gladys to rise, and the girl could not stand.

A clamour of voices assailed Mrs. Prothero, who was bewildered by the noise, and terrified at the remembrance of her husband.

"My good people, I don't know what to advise," she said, at last.

"She don't want to laive Carrmarrthinshire, my leddy."

"We'll be ruined intirely if we stop till she's cured, yer leddyship!"

"Niver a frind in the worrld, yer honour."

"Her mother and father, sisthers and brothers, all dead of the faver and the famine."

"Nobody left but her relations in Carrmarrthinshire, and, maybe, they're all dead and buried, yer honour's glory."

"And what'll we do wid her, poor sowl?"

Mrs. Prothero was looking compassionately on the poor girl, whilst sentence upon sentence was poured into her ear; and as the death of her relations was mentioned, she fancied she perceived a movement in her seemingly impassive features. She opened her eyes, and looked at Mrs. Prothero, who went to her, and seeing her lips move, knelt down by her side.

"Let them go, and send me to the workhouse, if you please, my lady," she murmured,

Mrs. Prothero once more left the barn, promising to return shortly, and, with trembling steps, again sought the apartment where her lord and master was reposing. A very decided snore met her ear. She stood by the bedside, and looked at the tassel, which was the only portion visible of her better half. She sat down on a chair; she got up again; she fussed about the room; she even opened the drawers and took out the Sunday attire of that Somnus before her. But nothing she could do would arouse him.

At last, she gently touched the face. A louder snore was the only reply. She gave a nervous push to the shoulder, and whispered into the bed-clothes, "My dear."

"Well, what now?" growled the justly irritated sleeper.

"My dear, I am very sorry, but the poor girl is too ill to move, and I really don't know what is to be done."

"Upon my very deed, if you are not enough to provoke a saint!" broke out Mr. Prothero, now fairly sitting up in bed. "If you will encourage vagrants, get rid of 'em, and don't bother me. I'll tell you what it is, Mrs. Prothero, if all of 'em are not off the farm before I'm up, I'll give 'em such a bit of my mind as 'll keep 'em away for the future; see if I don't."

Mrs. Prothero saw that her husband was redder in the face than usual, and she had a very great dread of putting him in a passion; still she ventured one word more very meekly.

"But the girl, David?"

"What's the girl to you or me! we've a girl of our own, and half a dozen servant girls.

We don't want any more. Send her to the Union."

"How can we send her?"

"Let the rascally Irish manage that, 'tis no affair of mine; but if you bother me any more, I vow I'll take a whip and drive 'em, girl and all, off the premises."

"Very well, David," said Mrs. Prothero, submissively, and with a heavy sigh, "but if the girl should die."

She walked across to the door, paused on the threshold, and glanced back; but there was no change in the rubicund face. She went into the passage, and slowly closed the door, holding the handle in her hand for a few seconds as she did so. She walked deliberately down the passage, pausing at each step. Before she was at the end of it, a loud voice reached her ear. She joyfully turned back, and re-entered the bed-room.

"Yes, David?" she said quietly.

"If the girl is really bad, send her in the cart, or let her have a horse, if you like," growled Mr. Prothero. "Only I do wish, mother, you would have nothing to do with them Irishers."

"Thank you, my dear," said the quiet little woman. "Then if the rest go away, I may manage about the girl?"

"Do what you like, only get rid of 'em somehow."

"Thank you."

"Oh, you needn't thank me! I'd as soon send every one of 'em to jail as not; but I can't stand your puffing and sighing just as if they were all your own flesh and blood."

"We're all the same flesh and blood, my dear."

"I'd be uncommon sorry to think so. I've nothing but Welsh flesh and blood about me, and should be loath to have any other, Irish Scotch, or English either."

Mrs. Prothero disappeared.

"That 'ooman 'ould wheedle the stone out of a mill," continued the farmer, rubbing his eyes, and deliberately taking off his night-cap, "and yet she dont ever seem to have her own way, and is as meek as Moses. She has wheedled me out of my Sunday nap, so I suppose I may as well get up. Hang the Irish! There is no getting rid of 'em. She's

given 'em a night's lodging, and a supper for so many years, that they come and ask as if it was their due. But I'll put a stop to it yet, in spite of her, or my name isn't David Prothero.

When Mr. Prothero came forth from his dormitory, he was in his very best Sunday attire. As he walked across the farm-yard in search of his wife, there was an air about him that seemed to say, "I am monarch of all I survey." Indeed, few monarchs are as independant, and proud of their independance as David Prothero of Glanaravon.

He was a tall, muscular man, of some fifty years of age. He was well made, and of that easy, swinging gait, that is rather the teaching of Dame Nature, than of the dancing mistress or posture master. His face was full and ruddy, betokening health, spirits, and that choleric disposition to which his countrymen are said to incline, whether justly or unjustly is not for me to determine. His hair had a reddish tinge, and his whiskers were decidedly roseate, bearing still further testimony to a slight irrascibility of temperament. But he

was a good-looking man, in spite of his hair and whiskers, which, as his wife admired them, are not to be despised.

"Where's your mistress, Sam?" roared Mr. Prothero across the farm-yard.

"In the barn, master," answered a man, who was eating bread and cheese on the gate, and swinging his legs pleasantly about.

"Tell her I want her."

In answer to the summons, immediately appeared his worthy helpmate. She carried a very beautiful half-blown rose in her hand, which, as soon as she approached her husband, she placed carefully in his button-hole, standing on tiptoe to perform this graceful, Sunday morning service.

"Thank you, mother," said Mr. Prothero, smiling, and looking down complacently on his little wife.

What went with all his lecture upon the profligacy of Irish beggars? I suppose it was silently delivered from his breast to the rose, for none of it came to his lips, though it was quite ready to be heard when the rose made her appearance.

"All the Irish are gone except the girl, Davy bach," said quiet Mrs. Prothero, "and they are gone to the Overseer to tell him about her, and I will see that she is sent to the workhouse to-night, that is to say if I can."

"I suppose you fed and clothed the ragged rascals?"

"I just gave them some scraps for breakfast, and indeed their blessings did me good."

"I should think they must. People that left a dying girl behind 'em."

"They promised to come back and see after her, when the hay-harvest is over. They are going into Herefordshire to get work, and she, poor thing, is looking for her relations in this county, and meant to get work here."

"Well, I want my breakfast. I promised brother Jonathan to go to church to-day. He is going to preach a charity sermon for the Church Building Society, and wants my shilling. He and Mrs. Jonathan are to come to-morrow, you know, my dear. I hope in my heart everything is as fine as fippence, or my lady 'll turn up her nose."

"I can't make things neater, Davy."

This was said by Mrs. Prothero, in a desponding tone, quite different from her former quiet cheerfulness, and she accompanied the words by rubbing her hands nervously one over the other.

"There now, don't look as if you were going to be smothered. Mrs. Jonathan isn't so bad as all that. I wish to goodness Jonathan hadn't married a fine lady. But then she brought him a good fortune, and it's all the better for our children."

"I don't want her money."

"But if it wasn't for her, my dear, Rowland would never have had an Oxford eddication."

"I'd as soon he had gone to Lampeter, or been made a good Wesleyan Minister, and then he might have been content to stay in Wales, instead of going off to England."

"There, there! never mind! He'll be a Bishop some day; and though you do still incline to the chapel, you'll be proud of that. Now, name o'goodness, let's have some breakfast."

With this peculiarly Welsh interjection, Mr. Prothero turned towards the farm, and followed by his wife, went to the desired repast.

CHAPTER III.

THE FARMER'S DAUGHTER.

"NOBODY has come for that poor girl, Netta, and I hav'nt the heart to send her away," said Mrs. Prothero to her only daughter Janetta, towards the close of the Sunday, the morning of which we noticed in the last chapter.

"I am sure, mother, you have been plagued quite enough with her already. You have neither been to church nor chapel, and scarcely eaten a morsel all the day. I can't imagine what pleasure you take in such people."

"I would'nt care if your father was at home; but I don't quite like to have her into the

house without his leave, and she is not fit to be left in the barn."

"Into the house, mother! That wild Irish beggar! Why, father would get into a fury, and I'm sure I should be afraid to sleep in the same place with such a creature."

"Oh, my dear child! when will it please the Lord to soften your heart, and teach you that all men and women are brothers and sisters."

"Never, I'm sure, in that kind of way."

Whilst the mother and daughter continue their conversation about Gladys, of which the above is a specimen, we will glance at Janetta Prothero, the spoilt daughter of Glanaravon Farm.

She is decidedly a pretty girl; some might call her a beauty. She has dark eyes, black hair, a clear pink and white complexion, a round, dimpled cheek, a fair neck, a passable nose, and a very red-lipped, pouting mouth. She is small of stature—not much taller than her mother—but so well-formed, that her delicate little figure is quite the perfection of symmetry. Her movements are languid rather

than brisk like her mother's, and she either has, or is desirous of having, more of the fine lady in her manners and appearance. We discern, as she talks, more of obstinacy than reason, and more of pride than sense, in her conversation, and the face rather expresses self-will than intellect, although not deficient in the latter.

We are led to suppose, from the appearance of the room in which the mother and daughter are located, that Miss Janetta is somewhat accomplished; more so than young ladies in her position commonly were some twelve or fourteen years ago. This is a large parlour, with some pretentions to be called a drawing-room. True, the furniture is of old-fashioned mahogany, the sofa of hair, the curtains of chintz, and all that appertains to the master and mistress of the house, of solid, but ancient make. But the square piano, the endless succession of baskets, card-racks, &c., the footstools with the worsted-work dog and cat thereon emblazoned, the album and other books, so neatly and regularly placed round the table, and above all, three heads in very bad water-colours that adorn the walls—all proclaim the superior edu-

cation of the daughter of the house, and her aspirations after modern gentility.

We will just take up the thread of the conversation of the mother and daughter at the end of it, and see what conclusions they have arrived at. In a somewhat doggedly excited tone, Miss Janetta says,

"Well, mother, I know that father would be very angry, and that she might give us all low, Irish fever. I should'nt wonder if she brought a famine with her."

"Remember, Netta, who said 'and if ye have done it unto the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.'"

"If those people are one's brethren, as father says, the sooner we disown our relations the better."

Whilst Miss Janetta was uttering this unchristian speech, and greatly shocking her mother thereby, a young man entered with a book in his hand, and throwing himself on the sofa began to read. It was soon, however, evident that he was listening to the conversation, although he professedly kept his eyes on his book. Poor Mrs. Prothero continued her

efforts to enlist her daughter on the side of charity, but did not greatly prevail—the young man did not interfere, probably being aware that it is better to let two women finish their own quarrel.

Again, however, they were interrupted by the appearance of a fourth, and more animated personage.

"Good evening, Mrs. Prothero. How do you do, Netta?" exclaimed the new comer, shaking Mrs. Prothero's hand, and pulling Netta's curls. Hereupon the young man arose from the sofa, and bowing profoundly, said,

"Good evening, Miss Gwynne," with a tone as grave as his appearance.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Rowland," said the young lady, who we now introduce in form as Miss Gwynne of Glanaravon Park. With a very becoming grace, she advanced and held out her hand to Mr. Rowland Prothero, eldest son of the good farmer and his wife, just returned from Oxford. Mr. Rowland slightly touched the hand, bowed again gravely, and placed a chair for Miss Gwynne.

"I thought I should never come here again,"

said that young lady, turning from Mr. Rowland with a nod and a "thank you," and retreating towards the window where the mother and daughter were standing, "what with the rain, and poor papa's nervous complaints, and all the business, I declare I have been as busy as possible."

"Now, Miss Gwynne, I am sure you will agree with me," cried Netta, suddenly brightening up and getting animated. "Do you think it right to encourage those Irish beggars?"

"Right! no, of course I don't."

"And do you think people ought to allow them to come into the house—to take them in, and to—to shelter them in short?"

"Decidedly not. I hope you don't do such things, Mrs. Prothero?"

There was a wicked twinkle in a merry eye, as this was said.

"The truth is, Miss Gwynne," said Mrs. Prothero, slowly rubbing her hands one over another, "there is a poor Irish girl in the barn almost dying, and it is impossible to send her to the Union to-night, or to leave her where she is."

"Oh, I'll write an order for the Union in papa's name. You can't believe a word those Irish say. You had better get her sent off directly."

This was said with the air of command and decision of one not accustomed to have her orders disputed.

"But, Miss Gwynne, if you only knew—" began the overwhelmed Mrs. Prothero.

"I know quite well. We are obliged to commit dozens of them as vagrants, and I should not at all wonder if we should not be compelled to have you taken up some day, for harbouring suspicious characters."

The tears stood in Mrs. Prothero's kind eyes. She had not much authority amongst her young people, apparently.

"There, mother! I knew Miss Gwynne would agree with me."

"And do you think the law of christian charity would agree with you, Netta?" here broke in a grave and stern voice from the sofa.

Both the young ladies coloured at this interruption; Miss Gwynne with mortified dignity, Netta with anger. Mrs. Prothero cast an

appealing glance at her son, who came forward.

"She may have my bed, mother," said the young man, colouring in his turn, as he met Miss Gwynne's defiant glance, that seemed to say, "who are you?"

"How very absurd, Mr. Rowland," said that young lady, laughing scornfully. "I suppose, according to your law of Christian charity, we must fill our houses with all the Irish beggars that come through Carmarthenshire! A goodly company."

"Have you seen this poor girl, Miss Gwynne?"

"No, certainly not, but I know by heart all she has to say."

"If you would but just see her," said Mrs. Prothero entreatingly, not daring to contradict the heiress of Glanaravon Park, who had a will of her own, if Mrs. Prothero had not.

"With the greatest pleasure; but I know all the 'my leddy's,' 'yer honour's,' and 'the sweet face o' ye,' that I shall hear."

"Dont go, Miss Gwynne, you may take the

fever. I wouldn't go for the world," cried Netta.

"I am not afraid of fevers, or anything else, I hope," said Miss Gwynne contemptuously. "You will be afraid of catching a tooth-ache from infection next," and herewith she left the room, followed by Mrs. Prothero.

During their short absence, Mr. Rowland Prothero read his sister a very proper lecture for a clergyman, on Christian charity and filial obedience, to which she listened with pouting lips and knitted brow, but with no answering speech, good or bad. She was not silent because she had nothing to say, but because she was afraid of her brother, who was the only person of whom she was afraid. Her feelings, however, found vent in the leaves of a rose that she was pulling to pieces, and scattering ruthlessly.

The lecturer on Christian charity was a tall, gentlemanly-looking young man, whose apparently habitual gravity of deportment, warmed into earnestness and animation, as he talked to his sister. He looked and spoke as if his soul were in the words he uttered, and as if

it had been choice and not compulsion that led him to become a minister in Christ's family.

The entrance of Mrs. Prothero and Miss Gwynne was a great relief to Netta. She looked up briskly at the latter, as if sure of sympathy, and if eyes full of tears could give it, she certainly was satisfied.

Mr. Rowland Prothero perceived the tears, and retired to his sofa, taking up his book and pretending to read.

"Can I help you, Mrs. Prothero? There does not seem a moment to lose. I will send for a doctor, or do anything I can," said Miss Gwynne.

"Thank you, dear Miss Gwynne," replied Mrs. Prothero, "I will put her in Owen's room."

"Who can we get to bring her in? Shall I go and fetch one of the men? Netta, do get some one to help us."

"I will help you, if you will allow me," said Mr. Rowland, rising from his sofa, and looking at Miss Gwynne with a glance of warm approval.

"Pray do, now, at once. I will go and help

you whilst your mother prepares the room. You could carry her quite well, for she is as thin as a ghost; I never saw such a wretched girl."

Miss Gwynne hurried to the barn, followed by Rowland. They found Gladys with a farm servant by her side, apparently either dead or asleep.

Rowland Prothero knelt down, and took her up gently in his arms, Miss Gwynne assisting. The poor girl unclosed her eyes, and looked wistfully at the face that was bending over her.

"You are with friends, and in God's hands," said Rowland gently, as the eyes languidly re-closed.

He carried her upstairs to his brother's room, and having placed her on the bed, left her to the care of his mother and Miss Gwynne.

Whilst they were employed in getting her into bed, a house-servant came to say that Miss Gwynne was wanted. She found a footman awaiting her, who told her that his master had sent him in search of her, and was in a state of

great anxiety about her. She ran up to Mrs. Prothero for a few minutes.

"Really, papa is too absurd, too provoking," she said with a vexed voice; "he has sent after me again, and I am sure he must know I am here. Let me hear if I can be of any service, Mrs. Prothero; I will send anything in the way of medicine or nourishment. Good bye, I will come again to-morrow."

"Mr. and Mrs. Prothero, the Vicarage, come to-morrow," said Mrs. Prothero.

"Yes, they are to dine with us on Wednesday, and told me they meant to sleep here. Good evening. Dear me, how wretched that poor girl looks."

Miss Gwynne was soon hastening homewards, heedless of the splendid sky above, or the glowing fields beneath. She was making reflections on the excellence of Mrs. Prothero, the silliness of Netta, the precision of Rowland, and the misery of the girl Gladys. Thence she turned her thoughts upon herself, and suddenly discovered that she had been too decided in at once ordering any person to the workhouse, without at first knowing the case.

"But it is no wonder that I am too decided sometimes, when my father is so dreadfully weak and vacillating," she said to herself; "indeed I do not think after all, that one can be too decided in this irresolute world."

This very decided young lady is the only child and supposed heiress of Gwynne of Glanaravon, as her father is usually called. She is an aristocratic looking personage, with a certain I-will-have-my-own-way air, that you cannot help recognizing at once. She is rather taller than most tall women, and the tokens of decision in her carriage, eyes, voice, and general deportment, would be disagreeable, but for the extreme grace of her figure, the unaffected ease of her manner, and the remarkable clearness and sweetness of her voice. She is handsome, too, with a noble forehead, sensible grey eyes, glossy chesnut air, and a very fine complexion. The many of her nominal friends and admirers who at heart dislike her, prophesy that in a few years she will be coarse, and say that she is already too masculine; but the few who love her, think that she will improve both in person and mind, as she rubs off the pride and self-

opinionativeness of twenty years of country life, against the wholesome iron of society and the world. But we shall see.

At present she is fortunate enough to rule everybody she comes in contact with ; her father, his servants, his tenants, the poor, the very mendicants that come to the door.

Certainly there is something very charming in her appearance, as she hurries up the fine old avenue that leads to her ancestral home. The ease of her port, the graceful dignity of her extreme haste, the heightened colour, and the glowing eye, are all very handsome, in spite of the coarseness in perspective. The poor footman can scarcely keep up with her ; he has not found the last twenty years at Glanaravon productive of the same lightness of step to him, as to his young mistress, and wishes she were a little less agile.

A handsome country house in a good park, has not often in itself much of the picturesque. Ruskin would not consider Glanaravon, with its heavy porch, massive square walls, and innumerable long windows, a good specimen of architectural beauty ; still it is a most comfortable

dwelling, beautifully situated; and the magnificent woods at the back, and grand view in front, would make the most unartistic building picturesque in appearance, if not in reality.

Miss Gwynne ran up the broad steps, through the large hall, and into a good library. Here a very tall, thin, sickly-looking man was seated in an easy chair.

"My dear Freda, I am so thankful you are come!"

"My dear father, how I wish you would not send for me the very moment I go out. I really cannot be pestered with servants. It fidgets me to death to have a man walking and puffing after me."

"But just consider, my love, the lateness of the hour."

"It is scarcely eight o'clock now, papa, and as light as possible."

"I am too nervous, my love, to bear your being out alone."

Miss Gwynne rang the bell authoritatively, and the footman entered.

"Tell Mrs. Davies to send some jelly, and whatever strengthening things there are in the

house, to Glanaravon Farm immediately," she said; then turning to her father, added, "Do you know, papa, Mrs. Prothero has taken in a sick Irish girl, and I have abetted it."

"You, child! I hope she has no infectious disease; it quite alarms me."

"I really don't know. But Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Prothero are going to Glanaravon to-morrow, and remember, you invited them to dinner on Wednesday."

"I am very sorry! that man kills me with the antiquities of the Welsh language, and heaven knows what old things that happened before the flood. But you must entertain them. I suppose we had better ask young Rowland."

"Oh, papa! He is so dreadfully quiet and stiff, and thinks there is only one man who ever went to Oxford, and he is that man; and I can't endure him."

"Perhaps not, my dear—indeed, perhaps not."

"If we ask him, we must ask Netta. She has come home quite accomplished from boarding school, and would do in a quiet way. Mrs.

Jonathan would be pleased, and you know she *is* a lady, though awfully particular. I can't endure her, either."

"Perhaps you could invite Lady Mary, and Miss Nugent to meet them?"

"I don't think they would like it. They would not object to the two clergymen, because, as Lady Mary says, 'you see, my dear, the cloth is a passport to all grades of society;' but they would not approve of Netta. That is to say, Lady Mary would think herself insulted if we introduced her sweet Wilhelmina to a farmer's daughter."

"She is a very superior woman, my love, and understands etiquette, and all that sort of thing, better than any one I ever met."

"She seems to me to understand her own interests, papa, as well as most people. But I will tell her that Sir Hugh and the Protheros are coming, and that we have asked Netta, so she can accept or decline as she likes."

"Do you think it wise, my dear, to put yourself so much on a level with Miss Prothero, as to invite her?"

"Oh! she understands how we are, very

well. It will be a source of pride and satisfaction to her, without making her presume more than before; and the vicar and his lady will like the attention."

"I dread the vicar. His genealogies are too much for me."

"Oh, I can put up with the vicar's antiquities, but not with the young vicar's pedantic Oxonianism. He does think so well of himself, and quite rules everyone at home."

"Oh! that is very fatiguing, I should think."

"I wish he would fall in love with Miss Nugent, and she with him, and carry off her forty thousand pounds. She is silly enough for anything, and it would be such a downfall to her mother's pride."

"Her mother is much too careful, my dear, and by far too superior a woman. And Miss Wilhelmina is very accomplished, and all that sort of thing, you know, and likely to make a fine match. She is very pretty, too."

"Yes; she and Netta Prothero would run in harness. Pretty, silly, rather affected, and having drawn each four or five drawings, and

learnt six tunes on the piano. Only the one is more fashionable than the other. Do you know, papa, Miss Nugent can play the Irish and Scotch quadrilles, and Netta "*Ar hyd Nos,*" with small variations. We will have a concert; you know I have asked the Rice Rices?"

"Very well, my dear. Now I think I will read a sermon to the servants, so just ring the bell."

CHAPTER VI.

THE MISER.

WHILST Mr. Gwynne is reading his sermon, and Mrs. Prothero is nursing the mendicant Gladys, an event is passing in the neighbouring country-town, involving matters of interest to her, and those belonging to her. In a small bed-room over a little huckster's shop, an old man lies dangerously ill. By his side is seated a middle-aged woman, watching. In a dark corner behind the bed, stands a man, who is so deep in shadow that you scarcely know whether he is young or old.

The room is small and shabby, and contains, apparently, few comforts for one nearly approaching his last hour.

There is a tap at the door, upon which the man behind the bed goes out, and returns, almost immediately, followed by Rowland Prothero. He goes towards the bed, and stooping down, whispers to the sick man.

"Father, you wished to see Rowland—he is here."

Rowland advances, and takes the seat vacated for him by the woman.

The three inmates of the room are, Mr. and Mrs. Griffith Jenkins, and their only son, Howel. They are cousins of the Protheros, Mrs. Jenkins being Mr. Prothero's first cousin, and the members of the younger generation being, consequently, second cousins.

Griffith Jenkins motions to his wife and son to leave the room, which they do immediately. Rowland kneels beside his bed, the better to hear what he has to say. He appears, however, to revive, and is distinct enough in his enunciation of the following words, though very slow.

"My son Howel is come back, Mr. Rowland, and do promise to be study."

"I am very glad to hear it; it must be a great comfort to you."

"But I am not seure of him. He will be spending my money that I have been takking such pains to make."

"I hope he may do good with it, Uncle Griff."

"Good! no such thing. Squander, squander! Spend the beauty gold! Will you promise me to see to it? tak' care of it?"

"I, Uncle Griff! I have no power with Howel. Would it not be better to pray to God to guide Howel, and trust in a higher power than mine?"

Mr. Jenkins put a long, thin, bony hand out of bed, and grasped Howel's hand tightly. He fixed two keen black eyes upon him, and, as he half raised himself in bed, displayed a withered face, the most remarkable feature of which was a very prominent, hooked nose, like the beak of a large bird.

"You wasn't thinking I was going to die, was you, Rowland? I 'ont just awhile, see you. But tell you your father there's more gold than he is thinking of; and Howel 'll be a husband for

any one, much less for Miss Netta. Promise me to be lending him a hand, if he do keep constant to your sister."

"I am sorry, Uncle Griff, that I cannot promise anything for Howel. If he grows steady as you say, there can be no objection; but he must prove it first. Would you like me to read to you, and pray to Almighty God, for Christ's sake, to change his, and all our hearts?"

"I did'nt be wanting a parson, but a relation, Sir; and I don't be going to die yet. Look you here. There's money in the bank—there's more in mortgages on Davies, Llansadwn, and Rees, Llanarthney—there's more on loan to Griffiths, Pontardewe,—Jones, Glantewey,—Pugh the draper, Llansant—and others. And there's a box beside. Mind you, I 'ont die yet, but I tell you, because I can trust you; and Howel don't know nothing."

"May I write it down for you, Uncle Griff; or would you have a lawyer?"

"No, no. I've had enough of law in paying for Howel, and nothing come of it. But you may be writing down a little. Here, in

that chest, there's pen, ink and paper; tak' you my keys, and open you it."

Griffith Jenkins took from under his pillow a bunch of keys, and fumbling amongst them, gave one to Rowland, with which he opened the chest, and procured the necessary writing apparatus.

"Give you me my keys—quick, quick!" cried the old man, again hiding them somewhere in his bed."

At his dictation, Rowland wrote a list of the different moneys he possessed in various places, and was utterly astonished to find that he had soon written down between sixty and seventy thousand pounds. Everybody knew that Griffith Jenkins was rich, but nobody had guessed how rich he was.

"Now say, 'I give and bequeath to my wife, Lizabeth Jenkins, ten thousand pound, out of the aforesaid mortgage on Jacob Davies Llansadwn's property.'"

"Is that all, Uncle Griff?"

"Yes, I sha'nt say no more."

"And the box of gold?"

Again the miser grasped Rowland's hand, and fixed his keen eyes on his face.

"I 'ont be dying yet, and I 'ont be putting that down to-night. Tell you your father what there is, without the box, and without more mortgages and loans; but don't you be talking to any body about it. Mind you, not to Howel nor to Lizabeth: promise me."

Rowland promised.

The miser fell back exhausted.

"And now, Uncle Griff, may I pray for you. Only think how soon you may be called to your account, to say exactly how you have employed your time, and the talents given—"

"I have done plenty—plenty—all out at interest, at five, six, even ten per cent; none wrapped up in a napkin. I don't be calling a box a napkin, Rowland Prothero."

"May I call in Mrs. Jenkins and Howel, and pray for you? Think, oh think, of the great Judge, and great Mediator. Oh, God, have mercy upon us, miserable sinners!"

As Rowland said this, he clasped his hands, and looked upwards, in unutterable supplication. The old man was alarmed.

"I don't be going to die, but you may call 'em in."

Rowland rose and obeyed. Mrs. Jenkins appeared with a candle in her hand. The old man rose with an effort as she drew near the bed.

"Put—out—the—candle," he muttered.

As the night was fast drawing in, Mrs Jenkins hesitated.

"Put — out — the — candle," repeated the dying man, with a still stronger effort to rise and extinguish it himself. "The ruling passion strong in death" must be attended to, and the light was extinguished. Rowland Prothero clasped his hands with a groan, and repeated aloud a prayer from the service for the dying. The terrified wife knelt down by the bed, in the deep gloom ; and in the still deeper gloom behind, the son buried his face in his arms, and leaned upon the little table.

Whilst Rowland Prothero was praying from the very depth of his heart, for the soul that was thus awfully passing to its account, they were all aroused by the last fearful struggle between death and life, of him who had made

gold his God. For some time they feared to rekindle the light, but at last they ventured. It was but to witness the last dread pangs of one who had made wife and son secondary to the great, absorbing passion of avarice; and now he was constrained to depart from the scene of his toil, and to leave all that he had grovelled for, behind him for ever!

We will not dwell upon the awful hours that succeeded his final words. He neither spoke nor was conscious again. Light and dark were alike to him. Save that he grasped something in his right hand with an iron hold, reason and power had left him; death was still fighting with life, and gradually gaining the last great victory.

A few hours afterwards, and when that victory had been gained, the scene was changed in that small house. The chamber of death was deserted, and the wretched clay of the miser, decently covered with a white sheet, lay heavy and still, where the spirit that formerly animated it, had been accustomed to brood over the miserable gains of its days and years on earth.

In the small sitting-room below, behind the little shop where these gains had been begun and continued for half a century, or more, sat the widow, surrounded by a score of gossips, who had left their beds and homes at day-break, to condole with her.

It would have been much more unnatural than natural if Mrs. Jenkins had grieved at heart for the husband she had lost. Married, or rather sold to him, when he was fifty, and she thirty, she had lived five or six and twenty years of pure misery with him. She had starved with him, when she could not pilfer from him, and had endured patiently all these years, what seemed past endurance, in expectation of the closing scene. She had married and lived upon the prospect of his death, and it was come at last; and now that it was come, the awfulness of that last struggle overpowered her, and she wept and lamented as copiously as if her husband had been the kindest and most liberal in the world. Still she was free, with competence, she hoped, in perspective; and this thought, together with the ever all-pervading one of her idol, her treasure, her only son, and

his expectations, more than counterbalanced that of the death she had witnessed.

"Come you, don't you be takking on so," said one old woman, soothingly, as the widow rocked herself to and fro, and held her handkerchief to her eyes.

"Tak' you this drop o' tea," said another, "it'll be doing you good."

"The Lord will be having mercy on his soul," said a third, whose conscience was large when she was offering comfort.

"There now, keep up your spirits, Mrs. Jenkins, fach," said a fourth, entering with a comfortable glass of gin and water, that did seem of an exhilarating nature.

"There's a comfort Howel will be to you now!" said a fifth, triumphantly.

"Deed to goodness, Griffey Jinkins was a saving man, and you have lost him Mrs. Jinkins, fach," began the friend with the gin and water, "but I am seeing no use in takking on so. When John Jones died, he was leaving me with ten children, and they have all come on somehow. And you have only wan son, and he is

so ginteel ! Drink you this, my dear, and don't be down-hearted."

Mrs. Jenkins turned from the tea to the gin and water with no apparant reluctance, and swallowed a portion of it. Revived by the beverage, she responded to the condolences of her friends, by more rockings, sobs, and applications of the handkerchief, and finally unburdened herself of her grief in the following manner.

"My son Howel, oh yes, he'll be a blessing to me, I know. Says I to my poor Griffey—oh dear, only to be thinking of him now !—says I, 'Let us be giving Howel a good eddication, and he so clever as never was, and able to be learning every thing he do put his mind to, and never daunted at nothing—grammar, nor music, nor latin, nor no heathen languages, and able to read so soon as he could speak, and knowing all the beasts in the ark one from another, when he was no bigger than that;' says I, to my poor Griffey, 'oh annwyl !* we have only wan child, let him be a clargy, or a torney, or a doctor, or something smart,' and says he, 'I can't

* An epithet of sorrow, equivalent to 'oh dear !'

afford it,' he was rather near or so, you know, was my poor Griffey ; but I never was letting him rest day or night, and the only thing he wasn't liking was being much talked over. So says I, ' come you Jinkins, bach,' he liked to be called by his sirname, ' if you do larn Howel well, he'll be making his fortune some day, for he do say so, he do be always saying—I'll be a great man, and get as much money as father.' I eused to put in the last words of myself, for Howel never was taking to making money, but 'ould as soon give it away as not. Only poor Griffey, oh dear ! oh dear ! was never knowing that, because I did be hiding it from him as much as I could."

Whilst the widow talks on in this strain to her sympathising friends, her son and Rowland Prothero are in another small room of the house, engaged in a very different style of conversation. The room in which they are, is worth a few words of description ; not for any beauty or desert of its own, but for its heterogeneous contents. You would think a small music warehouse, a miniature tobacco shop, or branch depôt of foreign grammars and dictionaries,

were before you. Every kind of musical instrument seems to have met with a companion in this tiny apartment. Here are a violin, violoncello, horn and cornopean ; there an old Welsh harp, and unstrung guitar. On this shelf are pipes of all sorts and sizes, forms and nations ; the straight English, the short German, and the long Turkish :—on that are cigar boxes, snuff-boxes, and tobacco-boxes of various kinds and appearances. Scattered about the room are play books without number, from Shakspeare to the dramatists of the present day ; and interspersed with these, collections of songs of all countries, and of all grades of merit. Some few novels, mostly French, live with the plays and songs ; and Latin, French, German, Italian, Welsh, Spanish and English grammars and dictionaries take up their abode in every available corner. A quantity of fishing tackle and a gun are thrown upon the window seat, and an embroidered waistcoat, blue satin cravat and a pair of yellow kid gloves, lie on an unoccupied chair.

From the general appearance of this room, the imagination would conceive great things of

its inmate; all we shall here say is, that he is one who has the reputation of being a natural genius, and firmly believes that he is one.

As all natural geniuses are supposed to have something very remarkable in their appearance, we will just take a sketch of the miser's son, as he alternately leans on the table, or stalks about the room during his earnest conversation with his cousin. He has decidedly sentimental hair; long, black, shining, and with a tendency to curl; he has, what might be termed, poetical eyes; bright, piercing, and very restless; the sharp aquiline nose of his father slightly modified, and a mouth and brow which curl and knit in a manner that may be poetic, but might be disagreeable, under less soothing influences. That he is very handsome, no one could dispute, and it is equally certain that he has an air much above the position in which he was born; but the expression of his face inspires distrust rather than confidence, and conveys the impression that there is more of passion than feeling beneath the fiery eyes, and compressed mouth.

A great contrast to this family genius is pre-

sented in the person of his cousin Rowland, now addressing him earnestly and seriously upon the grave subjects naturally uppermost at such a time. He, too, is sufficiently good-looking, with an open, though grave, cast of countenance, fine, soft, hazel eyes, and a tall, manly figure. By "sufficiently good-looking," I mean that he is neither very handsome nor ugly, and when his lady friends debate upon his outer man, they generally wind up by saying, "Well, if he isn't handsome, he is very genteel-looking."

We are not going to repeat here the well-known fable of the "Hare and the Tortoise," but something of the character of those animals may be found in the cousins. At their first dame's school, as well as at the more advanced grammar-school of their little town, Howel was always able to beat Rowland in swiftness, whilst Rowland effectually distanced Howel in the long run. It was Rowland who carried off the prizes, when study and prolonged endeavour were necessary to obtain them, whilst Howel eclipsed all his cotemporaries, if a theme were to be written, or a poem learnt.

Such differences are so frequent, and have been so often discussed, that it is scarcely necessary to pursue the contrast further; but the result, at the present, stands thus. Howel, the elder of the two, has dipped a little into everything; has gained a reputation for genius; has been articled to an attorney—but is in no apparent danger of becoming one—has written various articles for the county papers, and has had the pleasure of seeing them printed; has acquired a smattering of several languages, and various styles of music; and has proved himself an admired beau amongst the ladies, and a favourite boon companion amongst the gentlemen. He has been idolized and spoilt by his mother, and stinted and pinched by his father, and having no very great respect or admiration for the talents or conduct of either parent, has not tried much to please them, save when it suited him.

The result of all this, if not already apparent, will, doubtless, be seen hereafter, for, at four or five-and-twenty, conduct and principles begin to establish themselves.

Rowland Prothero is very much the reverse

of all this. From a child, he had a desire to enter the church, which desire was fostered by his uncle and aunt into a resolution, when he grew old enough to resolve. As they very nearly adopted and educated him, his parents made no objection, and as they were ambitious to raise their family in worldly position, they spared no expense.

Rowland was reckoned dull, but plodding, at Rugby, whither his uncle sent him. However, his dullness and plodding were more successful than the brightness of many, since they managed to gain a scholarship at school, which helped him at Oxford. He was called proud and obstinate, and he was both. Pride and obstinacy were the characteristics of his family, but in him they fortunately tended to good: inasmuch as his pride generally led him to do well, and his obstinacy kept up his pride.

At present, it would be difficult to say whether he is a young man likely to shine in the path he has chosen, or to walk quietly along it unnoticed. His friends do not anticipate anything remarkable, but they expect him to be slow and sure. He did very well at college,

but gained no greater honours than the respect and good-will of those he was known to. Query? Is not that worth as much, morally, as a first class?

At home, he is understood by few. He has not many associates, because, either from his own fault, or some mental peculiarity, he cannot fall in with those who are immediately about him; and, consequently, is rather feared by his acquaintances, and reckoned proud, stiff, and conceited —above his birth, in short.

With him, as with Howel and everyone else, the course of years will show the man. "Handsome is that handsome does."

"The fact is, Rowland," said Howel, as he suddenly stood still in one of his rapid walks across the room, "you and I never could agree in anything, and never shall."

"I hope we may yet agree in many things," said Rowland, gently. "At present, all I wish you to do is to pay your debts, go to London, take out your stamps, and become an attorney."

"I am the best judge of that, and shall be my own master now. At all events, I can

can make some people ashamed of themselves."

"I only wish to advise you for your good, now that you are your own master. Your poor father begged me—"

"Oh, Rowland, I can't stand any more about my father. Everybody knows what he was and, I suppose, nobody expects me to live in the same line. I am emancipated, thank heaven! and the world shall soon know it."

"Still, he was your father."

"No one knows that better than I do, I should imagine; but if you expect me to mourn as others do for a parent, you will be disappointed. He never showed me one token of love, or acted by me as a father, from the day of my birth till his death."

"At least, he has left you and your mother handsomely provided for, and with his last words, hoped that you were now very steady."

"He did! I wonder who dares to say that I am not steady? But how do you know how we are provided for?"

"He begged me to write down what he was

worth. I will give it you at some future time, but not now."

"Why not now?"

"Because I think it is scarcely yet a time to consider money-matters. After the last duties are performed, you shall have the paper. Part of his property is written down, but a box of gold and some other sums he did not name. After that last sad scene, one can scarcely think of anything earthly. Oh, Howel! I wish you would consider the shortness and uncertainty of life, and what is its end."

"So awful do I consider its end, that I mean to enjoy it whilst it lasts. But don't go off with the impression that I was not shocked and frightened with what we have just seen. It is one thing to read and write about a death-bed, and another to witness it. But I cannot weep or pray as some people can."

"You might do both, if you would only seek aright."

"There, enough! I am past being preached to as a naughty boy, and can now look forward to some enjoyment, without robbing my own father, or getting my mother to rob him, to

procure it. But I shall never forget that last struggle; no, never."

Here, with a face of horror, Howel began his restless walk again. Rowland sat in melancholy silence.

"Rowland," suddenly broke in Howel, "how is Netta?"

"Quite well, I thank you," answered Rowland, gravely.

"I have not seen her for a long time; will you remember me to her?"

"I cannot promise to do so."

"Do you think me a fiend, Sir, that my name cannot be mentioned to my cousin? I will manage to convey my own remembrances."

"Howel, you know how it is; I do not mean to be unkind. If only you would give up your old life, enter your profession, and begin another—"

"That is as I choose. I shall be glad of the paper you wrote for my father, and then you and I, Rowland, are best apart."

"Good-bye then, Howel; perhaps, some day you may know that I wish you well. I will bring the paper at the funeral."

"For heaven's sake stay, or send some one else. I cannot bear to be alone here: his ghost will haunt me."

"Then let me read to you."

Howel assented gloomily, and threw himself on the bed in the corner of the room. Rowland took a small Testament from his pocket, and resolutely read several chapters.

During the reading, Howel fell asleep.

CHAPTER V.

THE FARMER'S SON.

At about ten o'clock on Monday morning, Miss Gwynne rode up to the door of Glanaravon Farm, and, dismounting, entered the house. She was attended by a groom, and told him that she should not be long.

"How is that poor girl, Netta?" were her first words, on entering the house.

"Very ill indeed, I believe," said Netta, rather sulkily.

"Where is your mother?"

"She has been with the Irish beggar all the morning, and all night too. I don't know what father and uncle and aunt will think."

"Will you ask your mother whether I can see her for a few minutes?"

"Certainly."

"Netta, you must come and dine with us on Wednesday, with your uncle and aunt."

"Thank you," said Netta, brightening up as she left the room.

"I'm sure I scarcely know whether she will behave rightly," muttered Miss Gwynne, tapping her hand with her riding-whip.

Mrs. Prothero soon appeared.

"You good, dear Mrs. Prothero!" exclaimed Miss Gwynne, running up to her and taking both her hands. "You look quite worn out. How is that poor girl?"

"Alive, Miss Gwynne, and that is almost all," was the reply of Mrs. Prothero, very gravely uttered.

"Can we do anything? Did Dr. Richards come?"

"Yes, Miss Gwynne, and was very kind. He has been again this morning."

"I came to invite Mr. Rowland and Netta to dinner on Wednesday, with Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Prothero."

"Thank you, Miss Gwynne, I will tell Rowland; but I really think Netta had better not go."

"I have just told her of the invitation."

"Dear me! I am really very sorry. I beg your pardon, Miss Gwynne, but it will put ideas into her head above her station."

"We shall be very quiet."

The conversation was interrupted by the sudden entrance of Rowland. He drew back on seeing Miss Gwynne, and bowed, as usual, profoundly. She, also, as usual, advanced and held out her hand.

"My father begged me to ask if you would come and dine with us on Wednesday," said Miss Gwynne.

"Thank you, I am much obliged," stammered Rowland, whilst a bright flush overspread his face, "I shall be very happy, if I am not obliged to be elsewhere. Mother, poor Griffith Jenkins is dead. I have been there all the night."

"Dead! I had no idea he was so ill! Oh, Rowland, how did he die?"

"Just as he lived, mother. With the key

of his coffers so tightly clasped in one hand, that it was impossible to take it from it after he was dead. And the said coffers hidden, nobody knows where. But poor Mrs. Jenkins has no friend near who can be of any real comfort to her. I wish you could go to her for a few hours."

"This poor girl, Rowland—what can I do with her? And your uncle and aunt coming."

"I think I can manage my uncle and aunt till your return. As to the poor girl, I really know not what to say."

"Oh! if you will trust her to me, Mrs. Prothero, I will nurse her till you come back!" exclaimed Miss Gwynne eagerly. "I assure you I can manage capitally, and will send back the horses, and a message to papa."

"I am afraid it would not be right—I think the girl has low fever—Mr. Gwynne would object."

"I assure you it would be quite right, and I don't fear infection, and papa would let me do just as I like. In short, I mean to stay, and you must go directly. Is young Jenkins at home, Mr. Rowland?"

"Yes, he returned a few hours before his father's death."

"I suppose that horrid old man died as rich as Crœsus, and, according to custom in such cases, his son will spend the money."

"I wish he had not got it," said Mrs. Prothero.

"That is scarcely a fair wish, mother. Let us hope that he will do well with it."

"Never, never. He was not born, or bred in a way to make him turn out well."

"Nothing is impossible, mother."

"You must take care of Netta, Mrs. Prothero. But now do go to that wretched Mrs. Jenkins, and leave the poor girl to me, and Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan to Mr. Rowland. I hope you have been studying the antiquities of Wales at Oxford, Mr. Rowland?"

This was said as Mrs. Prothero left the room; and Rowland was startled from a rather earnest gaze on Miss Gwynne's very handsome and animated face, by this sudden appeal to him, and by meeting that young lady's eyes as they turned towards him. A slight blush from the lady, and a very deep one from the

gentleman were the result. The lady was indignant with herself for allowing such a symptom of female weakness to appear, and said, somewhat peremptorily,

"Will you be so good as to tell Jones to take the horses home, and to let my father know that he must not wait luncheon, or even dinner for me?"

"Excuse me, Miss Gwynne," said the young man, recovering his composure, "but I do not think my mother would be justified in allowing you to attend upon that poor girl."

"Allowing me! Really, I do not mean to ask her. I choose to do it, thank you, and I will speak to the servant myself."

It was now Miss Gwynne's turn to grow very red, as, with haughty port, she swept past Rowland, leaving him muttering to himself.

"What a pity that one so noble should be so determined and absolute. Let her go, however. Nobody shall say that I lent a hand to her remaining here. In the first place, she runs the risk of infection, in the second, every one else thinks she degrades

herself by coming here as she does. Still, her desire to take care of the girl is a fine, natural trait of character. I must just go and look over the 'Guardian.' A curacy in England I am resolved to get, away from all temptation. Yet I hate answering advertisements, or advertising. If my aunt's friends would only interest themselves in procuring me a London curacy, I think I should like to work there. That would be labouring in the vineyard, with a positive certainty of reaping some of the fruits."

The soliloquy was interrupted by the reappearance of Mrs. Prothero, dressed for her walk.

"Mother, you ought not to let Miss Gwynne stay."

"I! my dear Rowland! Do you think she would mind what I say to her!"

Miss Gwynne entered.

"I have sent off the servant, and now let me go to the girl."

This was said with the decision of an empress, and with equal grandeur and dignity was the bow made with which she honoured

Rowland as she made her exit, followed meekly by Mrs. Prothero.

A short time afterwards, she was alone by the bedside of the sick girl. Every comfort had been provided for her by Mrs. Prothero; and Miss Gwynne had little to do but to administer medicines and nourishment.

"Is there anything I can do for you, my poor girl?" she said, leaning over her bed. "Anything you have to say—any letter I can write—any—"

"If—you—would—pray—my lady," was the slow, almost inarticulate reply.

Pray! this was what Miss Gwynne could not do. "Why," she asked herself, "can I not say aloud what I feel at my heart for this unhappy creature? I never felt so before, and yet I know not how to pray."

She went to the head of the stairs, and called Netta.

"Will you ask your brother whether he will come and read a prayer to the poor girl?" she said.

A few seconds after, there was a step at the door. She opened it, and admitted Row-

land. He went to the bed, and began to whisper gently of the hope of salvation to those who believe. Gladys opened her eyes, and caught the hand extended to her.

"More—more," she murmured. "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief."

Rowland read the Office for the Sick, from the prayer book, and she responded inwardly, her lips moving. Miss Gwynne came to the bed, and kneeling down, joined in the prayers.

Again Rowland spoke soothingly to the girl of the need of looking to Christ, the Saviour, alone in the hour of her extremity; and she murmured, "He is my rock and my fortress."

"Do you trust wholly in Him?"

"In whom else should I trust? All human friends are gone."

"Not all, you have friends around you."

"Have I? thank you, Sir, God bless you."

"I will come again and read to you when you are able to bear it."

Rowland said this and withdrew, without speaking again to Miss Gwynne, or even bowing as he left the room.

"He certainly reads most impressively,"

thought Miss Gwynne, "I could scarcely believe he was not English born and bred; but still he is quite a Goth in manners, and I am sure he thinks no one in the country so clever as himself."

Rowland met Netta at the foot of the stairs.

"Netta, I really am ashamed to think that you can allow Miss Gwynne to wait upon that girl in your own house."

"I'm sure, Rowland, Miss, Gwynne needn't do it if she didn't choose. I don't want to catch the fever, and I never will run the risk by nursing such a girl as that."

"Surely, Netta, you cannot be our mother's daughter, or you could not use such unchristian expressions."

"I'm no more unchristian than other people, but you're always finding fault with me."

The conversation was interrupted by a loud knocking at the house door, and Farmer Prothero's voice was heard without, calling,

"Mother, mother, where are you? here we are, all come!"

Netta flew to open the door, and was soon industriously kissing a lady and gentleman, who

had just alighted from a little four-wheeled carriage, and were waiting, with her father, for admission. Rowland also, in his turn, duly embraced the lady, who seemed much pleased to see him. They brought in various packages, and proceeded to the parlour.

"Where's mother, Netta?" exclaimed Mr. Prothero.

Rowland answered for her.

"She is gone to Mrs. Griffey Jenkins', father; perhaps you have not heard that Uncle Griff is dead."

"Not I, indeed. Well! he's as good out of the world as in, though I'm sorry for the old fellow. But what'll we do without mother? She's always nursing somebody or other, either alive or dead."

Rowland turned to his aunt, and said that his mother begged him to apologize for her necessary absence for a few hours.

"I shall do very well, I dare say," said the aunt, whose countenance wore a somewhat austere expression.

She was a lady of middle age, who prided herself upon having a first cousin a baronet.

Her father, a clergyman, rector of a good English living, was the younger son of Sir Philip Payne Perry, and she an only child, was his heiress. Mr. Jonathan Prothero had been, in years gone by, his curate, and had succeeded in gaining the affections, as well as fortune, of the daughter, and in bringing both into his native country. He had the living of Llanfach, in which parish Glanaravon was situated, and lived in very good style in a pretty house that he had built something in the style of an English vicarage.

Mrs. Jonathan Prothero, or Mrs. Prothero, the Vicarage, as she was usually called, was tall and thin, very fashionably dressed, with a very long face, a very long nose, very keen greenish grey eyes, a very elaborately curled front, a very long neck, very thin lips, and very dainty manners. She was proud of her feet and hands, which were always well shod, stockinged, gloved, and ringed, and as these were the only pretty points about her, we cannot wonder at her taking care of them. People used to say she would have been an old maid, had not a certain auspicious day taken the Reverend Jonathan

Prothero to her father's parish, who having an eye, after the fashion of servants of a lower grade, to "bettering himself," wisely made her a matron. Having no children of their own, they lavished their affections on their nephews and niece, and their money on their education.

"My dear Rowland," said Mrs. Jonathan, "I think I have agreeable news for you. I wrote to my cousin, Sir Philip Payne Perry, whose wife's brother is, as you know, high in the church, and received this answer."

She put a letter into Rowland's hands, and watched his countenance as he read it.

"My dear aunt, how very good of you!" exclaimed Rowland, "the very thing I wished for. Oh, if I can only get it, I shall be quite happy. A curacy in London, father! Just read this. Sir Philip thinks I might not like it in the heart of the city, but that is really what I wish. Plenty to do all the week long. Oh, aunt, how can I thank you enough?"

"By making every effort to advance yourself in life, and to rise in the world, my dear nephew," said Mrs. Jonathan.

"What do you think, uncle?" asked Row-

land, turning to Mr. Jonathan Prothero, who was seated in the window, with a large book before him, that he had brought from the carriage.

"He! what! what did you ask?"

"Only what you think of this London curacy that my aunt has been so kind as to write about."

"Me! I! Oh, capital! just the thing in my humble opinion. If you get it, you will be able to go to the Museum, and look up the old genealogy we were talking about. Do you know I have made a remarkable discovery about Careg Cennin Castle. It was built—"

"Never mind, my dear, just now; we were talking of Rowland's curacy," interrupted Mrs. Jonathan, who generally managed all business matters.

"To be sure, my dear, to be sure, you know best," said Mr. Jonathan absently, resuming his book.

"For my part, sister," said the farmer, "I 'ould rather he had a curacy in his own country, and so 'ould his mother; but he's so confoundedly ambitious."

"Aunt, won't you come upstairs, and take off

your things?" asked Netta, interposing, for once in her life, at the right time.

"Thank you, my dear, I should be very glad," and they accordingly disappeared.

"Father," began Rowland, as soon as they were gone, "I think it right to tell you, that we were obliged, out of sheer charity, to take that poor Irish girl into the house. It was impossible to move her without risk of instant death."

"And upon my very deed, Rowland, if this isn't too bad," cried the farmer, stamping his foot on the floor, and instantaneously swelling with passion. "As if it wasn't enough to have paupers, and poor rates, and sick and dying, bothering one all day long, without your bringing an Irish beggar into the house. I never saw such an 'ooman as your mother in my life; she's never quiet a minute. I 'ont stand it any longer; now 'tis a subscription for this, now a donation for that, then sixpence for Jack such a one, or a shilling for Sal the other, till I've neither peace nor money. Come you, Sir, go and turn that vagabond out directly, or I'll do it before your mother comes home, hark'ee, Sir."

"I can't father, really."

"Then I will."

Off stalked the farmer in his passion, crying out in the passage, "Shanno, come here!"

A servant girl quickly answered the summons.

"Where's that Irish vagabond?"

"In Mr. Owen's room, Sir."

Up-stairs went the farmer, leaving Shanno grinning and saying, "He, he, he'll do be turning her out very soon, she will, he, he."

Rowland ran up-stairs after his father, calling out gently, "Stop, father, Miss Gwynne—" but the father was in the bed-room before he heard the words, and had made the house re-echo the noise of his opening the door.

He was instantaneously checked in his career by seeing Miss Gwynne advance towards him, with her finger in the air.

"Hush, Mr. Prothero," she whispered, "she is asleep. Look here; gently, very gently."

She led the enraged farmer by one of his large brass buttons to the bed-side where the white-faced Gladys lay. She looked so much like a corpse, that he started back affrighted.

Then Miss Gwynne led him out into the passage, and seeing from his angry face the state of the case, instantly said,

"It was I who had her brought here, Mr. Prothero; and bye and bye I will get her sent back to her parish, but until she is better, we must take care of her."

At these words from the all-powerful Miss Gwynne, Mr. Prothero was fain to put such check upon his rising choler as the shortness of the notice would allow. He could not, however, fully restrain the whole of the invective that had been upon his lips a short time before.

"No offence, Miss Gwynne; but 'pon my soul, I'm sick to death of my missus's pensioners and paupers, and I'm determined to have no more of 'em. You may do as you please, miss, at your own house, and I'll do as I please in mine."

Here Rowland popped his head out of a neighbouring bed-room.

"Father, Miss Gwynne is taking upon herself a risk and incumbrance that should be wholly my mother's. She has nothing to do with the girl, beyond showing her great kindness."

"Really, Mr. Rowland Prothero," began Miss Gwynne, drawing herself up to her fullest height, "I wish you would allow me to manage my own affairs."

"Yes, yes, Rowland. What, name o' goodness, have you to do with Miss Gwynne? I'm ashamed of the boy. I really beg your pardon, Miss, but I believe he's so set up by having a chance of going to London, that he don't know whether he stands on his head or his heels. Go you away, Rowland, directly. I won't have you interfaring with me."

Miss Gwynne could not help laughing as she saw Rowland's sense of duty struggle with his pride at this authoritative mandate; but she was very much surprised to see him bow politely to her and walk away. She wondered whether anything on earth could have induced her to obey a similar order.

She followed Mr. Prothero down stairs, and made herself so agreeable to him and Mrs. Jonathan, that they quite forgot Mrs. Prothero's absence, until the sudden return of that good woman set all matters right, and enabled Miss Gwynne to leave the farm.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MISER'S WIFE.

"I MUST have money," said Howel Jenkins as he sat alone with his mother in their little parlour the evening after Mrs. Prothero had left them.

"My dear, there will be plenty when we can find it, be you sure of that. I do know well enough that your poor father was having a chest full, only he was keeping his door locked and barred so that I could'nt see him at it."

"But surely, mother, you must have some idea where my father kept his gold. If I don't pay a man in London by to-morrow's post, I shall be in jail before a week is over my head."

"Mercy! Howel bach! Now don't you be spending the mint o' money that 'll be coming

to you, there's a good boy, before you do know what it is. Remember Netta! You'll be as grand as any of 'em now, if you do only begin right, and are being study and persevaring, and sticking to your business. I 'ould'nt wonder if you was to be a councillor some day. Only to think of me, mother of Councillor Jinkins! You may be looking higher than Netta, and be marrying a real lady, and be riding in your coach and four, and be dining with my Lord Singleton, and be in the London papers; and I 'ould'nt wonder if you was to be visiting the Queen and Prince Albert again, and be having your picture taken to put into your own books, and the 'Lustrated.' I always was saying I 'ould be making a gentleman of you, and I have."

"But, mother, before I can do anything like this, I must pay my debts, and make a new beginning. I will marry Netta, now, in spite of the whole tribe of Davids and Jonathans, and they shall see us as much above them as—as—money can make us. Now, mother, we must have a search for the money."

"Not whilst your father is in the house,

Howel; I should be afraid. Be you sure his spirit 'll be looking after the money till the funeral's over."

"Nonsense, where are the keys? We'll have a turn at the old bureau anyhow. Money I must have, at once, and Rowland is as obstinate as a pig about what the governor told him."

"Indeet, and indeet, Howel, you had better don't. Suppose it 'ould bring him to life again!"

"I'll risk that. Give me the keys."

Mrs. Jenkins handed a bunch of keys to her son with trembling fingers.

"Tak you a drop of spirits first. It do show how rich they are thinking us now. There's Jones, the Red Cow, and Lewis, draper, are letting us have as much credit as we like; and they 'ould'nt let us have as much as a dobbin or a yard of tape before poor Griffey died."

Howel drank a wine-glass of raw brandy, and went up-stairs with the keys in his hand. He crept stealthily into that room where the miser breathed his last, as if fearful of arousing

the body within the drawn curtains. He proceeded to the bureau, and tried the various keys of the large bunch that he now grasped for the first time in his life. At last one key entered the lock, and turned in it. Hush! there is a sound in the room. He turns very pale as he glances round. He sees no movement any where. The curtains are so still, that he almost wishes the wind would stir them. He opens the bureau, and again looks wistfully round. He is almost sure that the curtains move. "Coward that I am," he cries, "what do I fear!"

He turns again, and looking into the bureau, sees that all the open divisions are filled with papers, and imagines what must be the contents of the closed and secret compartments. As he touches one of these, a tremor seizes him, and he fancies that a hand is on his shoulder. He starts, and turns, but the curtains are motionless as ever. He goes into the passage, and calls, "Mother, come here. Quick! I want you directly."

Mrs. Jenkins comes up stairs, looking as pale as her son.

"Just help me out with this bureau, mother; I cannot examine it in this room, you have put such ridiculous notions into my head."

"I'm afraid, Howel."

"Nonsense, come directly, or I must get some one else."

The pair went into the room, and tried to move the bureau that had stood for nearly fifty years in that corner untouched, save by the husband and father, now lifeless near them. It was very heavy, and scarcely could their united strength move it from its resting-place. They finally succeeded, however, in dragging it towards the door, in doing which they had to pass the foot of the bed. Unconsciously, they pushed the bed with the corner of the bureau and shook it. They nearly sank to the ground with terror, expecting, for the moment, to see the miser arise, and again take possession of his treasures. The mother rushed into the passage, the son again called himself a coward, and, with a great effort, pushed the bureau through the door, and shut it after him.

"Now, mother, help to get it into my room; one would think we were breaking into another

man's house, instead of taking possession of our own property."

With the whole of their joint strength, they succeeded in getting the heavy piece of furniture into Howel's room, where, having first locked the door, they proceeded to examine its contents. Disappointment awaited them; they could find nothing but papers. Deeds, mortgages, bills, letters, accounts, were arranged in every open and shut division. The drawers contained nothing else, and the little locked cupboard in the centre, the key of which was found upon the bunch, also enshrined nothing but a few very particular documents.

"These papers could not have made the bureau so heavy," said Howel, biting his nails. "There must be secret drawers."

He pulled out the drawers and papers, and threw them on his bed. He tried to move the bureau, and found it almost as heavy as ever.

"I am thinking, Howel bach, that cupboard don't go through to the back of the bureau," suggested Mrs. Jenkins.

Howel seized the poker, and aimed a blow

at the cupboard; the mahogany did not give way, but they fancied they heard a chinking sound within.

"I am thinking," said the mother, "that it must be a double bureau. It is looking so much broader than it do seem."

Howel examined it, and began to think so, too; he took some carpenter's tools down from the shelf, and set to work to try to pierce the back of the bureau with a gimlet, in order to see if the gimlet would appear on the other side.

He worked the implement through a portion of the wood, and then found its course stopped by some still harder matter. He had recourse to his pen-knife, with which he hacked a hole in the wood, large enough to find that there was an inner back of iron, or some kind of metal. Each new obstacle served only to inflame his impatience, and to provoke his temper. He forgot the bed in the next room, and everything else in the world except the attainment of his object, and running down stairs, returned with a large sledge-hammer that he found in the coal-hole. With his

strength concentrated in one blow, he swung it against the back of the bureau, and had the satisfaction of finding his wishes gratified. The concussion moved some secret spring somewhere, for as the piece of furniture tottered on its foundation, and fell forwards against the bed, out rolled such a profusion of gold, as led Howel to believe the "El dorado" was found at last. Mother and son lifted up their hands in astonishment; gold pieces were in every corner of the room, scattered here and there like large yellow hail.

The noise of the blow, however, and the subsequent fall of the bureau had alarmed a neighbour, and before one piece of the tempting gold had been picked up, there was a loud knock at the door.

"Say the house has fallen in, the inquisitive fools!" exclaimed Howel, as his mother left the room.

Howel began to fill his pocket with gold pieces, and opening a box, pushed as many as he could hastily gather up, into it also. There were thousands upon thousands of sovereigns upon the floor.

"It was old Pal, the shop," said Mrs. Jenkins, returning to her golden harvest, "she was up nursing next door, and heard the noise. I tell her it was the table falling down."

"Now, mother, as soon as all is over, I must go to London and clear off my debts with some of this money; but I must see Netta first."

"Why don't you be putting it in the bank, Howel bach, it will make a gentleman of you."

"There's enough besides to make me a gentleman, if I am not one already; and I promise you, that when I am clear again, I will come back and make all the rich men in the country hang their heads. But I want to see Netta."

"Write you a bit of a note, and I will manage to send it."

"Pick up the money, mother, and I will write the note."

Mrs. Jenkins proceeded to obey her son, whilst he unlocked a desk, and wrote the following hasty lines,

"I must be in London next Monday. I must see you before I leave. Meet me at the old

place in the wood by the little Fall, Sunday evening, during church time."

He folded the note without signing it, and gave it to his mother without adding any address.

"Seal it, mother, and deliver it, or rather send it, by some one you can trust."

"I'll manage that. Now pick you up some of the money. Here's a hundred pound in my apron now, and gracious me! the lots more!"

"If you will keep the hundred pounds in your apron, mother, and let me have the rest, I shall be satisfied."

"But what 'll you be doing with all this goold?"

"Preparing to make you the mother of Councillor Jenkins, or of a famous man of some sort or other. What do you say to a poet, or a prime minister?"

"I 'ould rather you do be a Councillor, than anything, like Councillor Rice, Llandore."

"Well, I shall, perhaps, be a judge with all this money, and I dare say my father. . . ."

Here a vision of the bed in the next room

stopped the young man's speech, and shuddering slightly, he kicked a heap of sovereigns that lay near his foot, and sent them rolling into different corners of the room.

"Take away the ill-gotten gain, mother, it will never prosper; you had better go to bed, and I will do the same. I suppose it would be impossible to sleep with that yellow usury on the floor. I should have Plutus at the head of the imps of darkness about my bed, instead of 'Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,' that I used to pray to 'bless the bed that I lie on.'"

"Dont talk so fullish, Howel."

"Why it was you taught me all that Popery."

"The Lord forgive you, Howel, I never did see the Pope, and 'ould sooner teach you the Methodist hymn book."

"Well, never mind, let us go to bed."

"I'll go down and sit by the fire. Lie you down here. God bless you, my boy, give your poor mother a kiss."

"Good night, mother, or rather good morning," said the son, bending down carelessly to be embraced by the parent who would sacrifice her life for him.

When Mrs. Jenkins had left the room, Howel hastily collected the gold that was scattered about, and tossed it, without counting it, into the box already mentioned, which he locked, and put the key in his pocket. He then laid down on the bed without undressing, and tried to sleep. In vain, no sleep would come to steep his senses in forgetfulness. The bed in the next room, with its grim, gaunt inmate, was constantly before his eyes. If he dozed for a moment, the miser, his father, and the gold he had for years longed to obtain possession of, haunted him, and made him start like a thief, as if taken in the act of stealing the coin now by inheritance his own.

"Cursed gold!" he exclaimed at last, jumping from the bed, "what shall I do with it? Pay my debts, and turn a sober man? I will try. If Netta will have me, perhaps I may; indeed I am sure I could. We will come here and cut a dash first, however. I should like to humble some of our Welsh aristocrats by showing them how the son of Griffey Jenkins can eclipse their genealogies, by the magic power of the Golden God. I will stay over the funeral,

then off to town and get rid of my pressing debts; then pay Levi and Moses, and all my debts of honour; then set myself up in clothes and jewels, and come home, and carry off Netta; and, finally, have a year's pleasure, at least. Take Netta to the Continent, and teach her to *parlez-vous* a little more fluently than she does now, and to assume more aristocratic manners; in short—in short—"

The soliloquy was interrupted by the sudden explosion of some substance under his feet, upon which he accidentally trod as he was pacing up and down the room. He swore an oath that emanated from his fear, and thought that the lower regions had actually opened to receive the gold he was meditating upon, since fire and a smoke accompanied the noise, together with a smell of gunpowder. He rushed out of the room, just as his mother, alarmed by the sound, was running upstairs.

"They will carry him off before the funeral," he cried, as his mother asked what was the matter.

Ashamed of his cowardice, he made an effort to return to the room, followed by his mother. There was such a strong smell of sulphur, that both recoiled.

"What fools we are!" exclaimed Howel, forcing himself to enter. He stooped to examine the floor, and to his amusement and disgust, found the remains of a cracker, which had burst beneath his foot-tread. There were several others scattered about, that had been unnoticed, because they looked simply like bits of paper. These had evidently been placed by his father amongst the gold, in the hope of frightening any one who might wish to finger it, and had rolled out with the treasure they were intended to protect.

Mother and son again left the room, the latter locking the door as he did so, and putting the key in his pocket. They descended to the little parlour below stairs, where they finished the night, alternately dosing in their chairs, and talking, and occasionally supporting themselves by draughts of the different liquors that were spread upon the table near them. In spite of his best efforts to throw aside such thoughts, Howel could see nothing all that night but the gold, the father who had won it, and the poor wretches who had been ruined in paying usurious interest for it.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SQUIRE.

The dinners at Glanaravon were always unexceptionable. Mr. Gwynne was a bit of an epicure, and kept a capital cook, and his daughter liked to see everything done in good style. Even Mrs. Jonathan Prothero declared, that the dinner parties at her cousin's, Sir Philip Payne Perry's, were scarcely more agreeable, or better managed.

Still, at the dinner in question, all the elements were not quite well amalgamated. Although the dishes were so discreetly seasoned, and the entremets so exquisitely prepared, that the most fastidious critic of the gastronomic art would not have found a grain too much of any one ingredient; there was a less judicious mixture amongst the guests. Nothing could be more

perfect than the bearing of the host and hostess. Mr. Gwynne was a gentleman, even in his peculiarities, fastidiously a gentleman, and comported himself as such to every one. But he was too nervous, and had too low a voice to put his guests at ease: one half did not hear him at all, and the rest were slightly afraid of him, on account of this extreme fastidiousness, his nervous complaints, and his being very easily tired, or bored. Miss Gwynne was more successful at her end of the table, but she rather annoyed some of her guests by being too much bent on bringing out her friend Netta, and playing her off against Miss Nugent.

She was, however, very polite to all, and, for so young a woman, made a very agreeable and fascinating hostess. So, apparently, thought all the gentlemen, as they principally addressed their conversation to her, and had manœuvered, particularly the young ones, to sit as near her as possible. The Reverend Jonathan Prothero had the place of honour at her right, and did not take up much of her time. He appeared to be deep in the speculation concerning the ancient castle of which we have already heard, and was

learnedly descanting upon it to Mrs. Rice Rice, a lady on his other side. The said Mrs. Rice Rice, having *un œil aux champs, et l'autre à la ville*, was ostensibly listening to him, whilst she was really attending to her son, who was making visible efforts on the heart of the heiress, Miss Gwynne.

The Rice Rices were people of family and fortune, living in the neighbouring town. Mr. Rice Rice was in the law, and was, at that moment, engaged in discussing the affairs of the deceased Mr. Griffith Jenkins, and his quondam, articled pupil, Howel, with Rowland Prothero, across Miss Nugent. He was a portly, well-to-do-looking man, with a bald head, and good-humoured countenance. His wife was even more portly than himself, and sat in black velvet, and marabout feathers, as stately as a princess at a drawing-room. The task of keeping up the family reputation of the ancient house of Rice Rice, devolved, in a great measure, on this lady, assisted by her daughter; and it must be said, that if any one could have doubted the antiquity of this honourable race, after an hour's conversation with this

enthusiastic pair, he must have been a sceptic indeed! Family pride is a common weakness, but one could almost call it the stronghold of Mrs. Rice Rice; just as the various archæological and historical glories of Wales and the Welsh was the fortress of Mr. Jonathan Prothero.

It was into these towers of strength that these worthies retreated on all occasions. One saw the bulwark in Mrs. Rice Rice's ample, immoveable figure, and in the glance of the eyes that looked over the somewhat mountainous cheek; one saw it in a certain extension of the chin, turn of the mouth, and slightly *retroussé* nose. One saw it, above all, in her manner to the Protheros.

But Mrs. Jonathan Prothero was quite as capable of sustaining the dignity of the Philip Payne Perrys, as the Welsh lady that of the Rice Rices, and a satirist might have made a clever caricature of these patriotic dames; the one thin and stiff, the other stout and stiff, as they compared their family honours.

But the lady of undoubted rank and pretention of the party, is Lady Mary Nugent,

who can afford to patronize or throw overboard whomsoever she will. She is seated next to Mr. Gwynne, and is lavishing a considerable share of good looks and eloquence on that gentleman. Still in the prime of life, elegant, refined, pretty, and a skilful tactitian, she is a dangerous rival of the young ladies, and is not wholly innocent of a desire to eclipse them. She and her daughter are dressed very nearly alike, in some white and light material, and at a little distance, she might pass for the fair Wilhelmina's elder sister. A profusion of ornaments, too well arranged to appear too numerous, alone distinguish mother and daughter. She has a handsome profile, and a captivating manner, two dangerous things in woman; but therewith she has an occasionally malicious expression of eye and mouth, that somewhat impairs the effect of the captivation.

Her daughter is like her in profile, but has not her fascination of manner. She is, however, beautiful as a statue, with chiselled features, and marble complexion. But she does not, at present, appear to have character enough to possess the clever malice of her mother.

This may possibly come with suitors and rivals, who generally draw out all the evil, and sometimes much of the good, of woman's nature.

She is now simpering, and blushing, and saying pretty nothings, between Rowland Prothero and a certain Sir Hugh Pryse, who, on their respective parts, think her a goose, being attracted elsewhere. Sir Hugh is exerting his lungs to their utmost, and much beyond the boundaries that etiquette would vainly try to impose upon them, in endeavouring to attract the attention of Miss Gwynne; whilst Rowland is, as we before said, discussing the death of Mr. Jenkins, and the prospects of his son.

Perhaps the most uncomfortable person at the table, is Netta, who really does not quite understand how to behave herself in the new atmosphere in which she finds herself. She never was at a dinner-party before, never waited upon by grand servants, never surrounded by such gay people: and, in spite of her ambition to eclipse, by her beauty, the Misses Nugent and Rice Rice, she feels and looks rather awkward. Miss Gwynne does all in her power to reassure her, but she sits, looking very pretty—

by far the prettiest person in the room—and very ill at ease, until the ladies adjourn to the drawing-room, and she takes refuge in the pictures of the drawing-room scrap-book, and her aunt.

The gentlemen arrive in the course of time, which they must do, linger as long as they will over the delights of port and politics, and then the various schemes and thoughts engendered at the dinner-table are brought to light over the coffee-cup.

Miss Gwynne patronizingly singles out Rowland Prothero, who, reserved by nature, feels doubly so amongst the ill-assorted elements around him.

"Have you seen that poor girl since I was last at your house, Mr. Prothero, and how is she to-day?" asks the heiress.

"She asked to see me yesterday, and I went to her. She seemed more composed, and liked being read to; but she is in a very precarious state."

"Is your father more reconciled to her being with you?"

"Not at all. And it certainly is very

unfortunate. But he would not allow her to be neglected now she is thrown on his kindness."

"I wish she had never come," interposed Netta, who had ventured to cross the room to Miss Gwynne.

"Have you heard of the great catch you are all likely to have, Miss Gwynne?" here broke in Sir Hugh Pryse, of stentorian reputation.

"I do not know what you mean," said Miss Gwynne.

"Why, Mr. Rice Rice tells me there is more than a hundred thousand pounds to be raffled for by all the young ladies in the country. They have simply to put themselves into the lottery, and only one can have the prize."

"I never knew you so figurative before, Sir Hugh."

"Don't pay any attention to him, Miss Gwynne," said a fresh addition to the circle that stood round that young lady's chair. "He means that old Griffey Jenkins, the miser, is dead, and that Howel comes into all his immense wealth."

Miss Gwynne gave her head such a magnificent toss, that her neck looked quite strained.

"I do not imagine many *young ladies* will purchase tickets in that lottery," she said, with a stress upon the 'young ladies.'

"I have no doubt there are dozens who would, and will, do it at once," responded Sir Hugh. "And quite right too. Such a fortune is not to be had every day."

"But it is gentlemen, and not ladies, who are fortune-hunters," said Miss Gwynne, changing her tone, when she suddenly perceived that Netta's face and neck were crimson.

But the subject was become quite an interesting piece of local gossip, and, one after another, all the party joined in it.

"Howel Jenkins might make anything of himself if he would but be steady," said Mr. Rice Rice.

"Except a gentleman by birth," said his lady.

"Or the least bit of an archæologist," said Mr. Jonathan Prothero. "I tried one day—you will scarcely believe it, Mr. Gwynne—to

make him understand that Garn Goch was an old British encampment, but he would not take it in."

"Ah, really; I do not very much wonder myself, for I cannot quite 'take in' those heaps of stones, and all that sort of thing," responded the host.

"What can they find to interest them in that sort of person?" asked Lady Mary, in an aside to Mr. Gwynne.

Miss Gwynne overheard it, and answered for her father.

"He is a young man of great talent, very rich, very handsome, and has had a miser for a father. Is not that the case, Mr. Rowland?"

"I—I—really, it is scarcely fair to appeal to me, as he is a relation."

"And do you never say a good word in favour of your relations?"

"I hope so, when they deserve it," said Rowland, resolutely, glancing at his sister, who was biting her glove.

"If I may be allowed an opinion," said Mrs. Jonathan, decidedly, also glancing at poor Netta, "I should say that Howel Jenkins was

a complete scapegrace. What he may yet turn out, remains to be proved."

"Well, that is putting an end to him at once," said Miss Gwynne, "and I think we had better play his funeral dirge. Lady Mary, will you give us 'The Dead March in Saul,' or something appropriate. Never mind, Netta; I daresay Cousin Howel will turn out a great man by-and-bye;" this last clause was whispered to Netta, whilst the young hostess went towards a grand piano that stood invitingly open, and begged Lady Mary Nugent to give them some music.

That lady played some brilliant waltzes, after which, her daughter accompanied her in the small bass of a duet.

"'Pon my soul, that's a pretty girl, that little Prothero!" said Sir Hugh Pryse to young Rice Rice. "I never saw such a complexion in my life. Roses and carnations are nothing to it."

"Rather a vulgar style of beauty, I think," said Mr. Rice Rice, junior, taking up an eyeglass, and finding some difficulty in fixing it in his eye. He had lately discovered that he was near-sighted, to the great grief of his mother,

who, however, sometimes spoke of the sad fact in the same tone that she used to speak of the Rice Rice and Morgan of Glanwilliam families. She herself belonged to the latter.

"I vow she's lovely!" cried the Baronet, so emphatically that everyone in the room might have heard him. Most of the ladies, doubtless, did, and appropriated the sentiment, but by-and-bye, Netta was triumphant, as he went and sat by her, and complimented her in very audible terms.

She blushed and coquetted very respectably for a country damsel, and wondered whether a poor baronet, or a wealthy miser's son would be the best to help her to humble the pride and condescension of the Nugents and the Rice Rices.

Whilst Lady Mary Nugent was playing, Mr. Gwynne very nearly went to sleep, and Rowland Prothero, who liked nothing but chants, and a solemn kind of music that he chose to think befitting a clergyman, was, in his turn, looking over the drawing-room scrap-book. Miss Gwynne gave her papa a sly push, and whispered, that she believed Mr. Rowland Prothero played chess.

Mr. Gwynne aroused himself, and challenged his young neighbour. Miss Gwynne, assisted by all the gentlemen, brought the chess-table, and the game soon began.

There is no doubt that there is nothing in the world more selfish, more absorbing, more disagreeable to everyone excepting the players, than chess. Mr. Gwynne began his game half asleep, Rowland began his in a very bad temper. The former was glad of anything that could keep him awake, the latter was disgusted at having been made the victim of Miss Gwynne's anxiety to preserve her father from falling fast asleep in the midst of his guests. But, by degrees, the one was thoroughly aroused, and the other forgot his annoyance. Both soon ignored the presence of any human being save himself and his opponent.

Music and talking went on on all sides, but they made no impression on the chess-players. Lady Mary performed all her most brilliant airs and variations in vain, as far as Mr. Gwynne was concerned; and Rowland was even unconscious that Netta had resolutely played through all the small pieces she had learnt at

school, at the particular request of Sir Hugh Pryse.

"That game will never finish," at last exclaimed Lady Mary, approaching Mr. Gwynne. "How can anyone like chess?"

Mr. Gwynne kept his finger on a piece he was about to move, glanced up, but did not speak.

"They tell me you ought to have, at least, five or six moves in your eye, whilst you are making one," said Sir Hugh. "For my part, I always find one move at a time more than I can manage. It certainly is the dullest game ever invented."

"Chess is a game of great antiquity," said Mr. Jonathan sententiously. "It is supposed to have been invented in China or Hindostan, and was known in the latter place by the name *Chaturanga*, that is, four *angas*, or members of an army."

"The army must be proud to send such members to parliament," said young Rice Rice, with a consciousness of superior wit, in which the remainder of the party did not appear to participate.

"True, young gentleman," said Mr. Jona-

than, "and well she might, for they were elephants, horses, chariots, and foot-soldiers; but what such members of an army have to do with parliament, I should be glad to hear you explain. I do not remember mention being made of parliament till the twelfth century. It was first applied to general assemblies in France, during the reign of Louis the Seventh; and the earliest mention of it in England is in the preamble to the statute of Westminster in 1272. It is derived from the French word *parler*, to speak."

"Then," said Miss Gwynne, "there must be some truth in what I have heard, that the first parliament was composed of women."

"Good, good, 'pon my soul!" roared Sir Hugh.

"But Sir William Jones says of chess," continued Mr. Jonathan, in the same unchanged tone and manner, "that the Hindus—"

"Oh, my dear, pray do not let us hear any thing of Sir William Jones; I am sick to death of all the Jones's," interrupted Mrs. Prothero, causing a diversion, and a suppressed laugh at

her expense, instead of at young Rice Rice's, who had made the last sally upon Mr. Jonathan, and a somewhat mortifying retreat.

It was remarkable, that whoever made a sly attack upon that worthy, with a view to a joke, was sure to have the tables turned upon him, by the matter-of-fact way in which his joke was received, refuted, and cut to pieces.

"I assure you, my dear, there have been many very celebrated Jones's, Sir William at the head of them. He was a great Oriental scholar. Then there was Inigo Jones, the architect; and John Paul Jones, the Admiral; and Dr. John Jones, the grammarian, born in this very county; and—and—"

"That celebrated Mr. David Jones, Mr. Prothero, whose locker was so deep that I am sure he must have been a relation of the Admiral," suggested Miss Gwynne.

"Truly so, my dear—but I have read—"

"I am afraid I must trouble you to order my carriage, Mr. Gwynne," said Lady Mary, looking impatiently, first at the chess table, secondly at her daughter, who was engaged in animated nonsense with Mr. Rice Rice junior; and

thirdly at Sir Hugh, still occupied in making Netta blush.

"I beg your pardon; one moment, Lady Mary; I must just castle my king."

"Perhaps you had better put an end to the game, papa," said Miss Gwynne.

"Not for the world, my dear. What do you say, Mr. Rowland?"

"I should certainly like to finish it, but perhaps we are inconveniencing others."

"Ah, yes, to be sure. Then will you come and dine with me to-morrow, and we will finish it?"

"Thank you, I shall be very happy."

Mr. Rice Rice junior, and Sir Hugh wished that they were good chess players. It was quite an honour to be invited to a family party at Glanaravon.

"Put the chess-table into the book room, Winifred, and lock the door."

Mr. Gwynne actually rose in the excitement of the moment.

"If the servants come, they will disturb the men, and—and—all that sort of thing, you know."

Miss Gwynne and Rowland carried the chess-table into a small room, opening into the drawing-room, and duly locked the door after them.

"I suppose you are fond of chess," said Miss Gwynne for want of something to say.

"Very," said Rowland laconically, and she little knew what was passing in his mind.

Always the same thoughts when in her presence—thoughts of mingled approbation and dislike. But she cared little what he thought of her.

"Dry and pedantic, and very disagreeable," was what she thought of him.

"Your nephew is rather a striking-looking young man," were Lady Mary's words to Mrs. Prothero, during his temporary absence.

"Yes, he is very clever and gentlemanlike. He gained high honours at Oxford, and my cousin, Sir Philip Payne Perry, is going to procure him a London curacy."

Lady Mary looked still more favourably upon Rowland when he returned, with a flush on his face, from the book-room.

"Do you know that young Prothero is a

very handsome young man ?" she said to Miss Gwynne.

"Very handsome," said Miss Gwynne, remembering her intentions for Wilhelmina. And the carriages were announced.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MISER'S SON.

It was Sunday evening, and all the inmates of Glanaravon Farm were either at church or chapel, with the exception of Netta, and one of the servants, who remained to watch the sick girl. Netta said she had a head-ache, and preferred staying at home. By way of curing it, she put on her best bonnet and went for a walk. As soon as she was out of sight of the house, she set off at a pace that did not bespeak pain of any kind. She soon struck out of the country road, with its hedges of hawthorn, into a field, and thence into a small wood or grove, almost flanking the road. The warm June sun sent his rays in upon her through the trees, and helped them to cast checkered shadows upon her path, lighting up, every here

and there, a bunch of fern or flowers, and brightening the trunks of the interlacing trees. As she saw the lights and shadows dancing before her, she became serious for a moment, and fancied they were like the will-o'-the-wisp, and portended no good; but she soon quickened her pace, and at the first opening went out again into the road, where the sun was uninterrupted in his gaze, and her few fanciful thoughts took flight.

She glanced furtively into one or two cottages as she passed them, and the absence of all inmates seemed to reproach her for her Sunday evening falsehood. At last she reached a small cross-road or lane, down which she turned, heedless of the profusion of wild roses that actually canopied the way. Another path, narrower still, and thickly bordered with blackberry bushes in full blossom, brought her to what seemed a large mass of brambles, low underwood, and occasional young oaks. There were, however, little patches of grass here and there amongst the thicket, and into one of these she got with some difficulty. This was the hall from which diverged one or two little pas-

sages, that looked so dark, narrow, and brambly, that they appeared inaccessible. But Netta managed to push aside some briars with her parasol and enter one. Almost at her first footstep she tore her pretty muslin dress, but folding it closer round her, she pushed her way. The smart pink bonnet was in great danger, but escaped uninjured.

At last she found herself on the brink of a deep ravine, almost precipitous, and heard the sound of rushing water beneath her. Large, gloomy trees outspread their brawny arms on each side of this gorge and lovingly embraced above it, so that the rays of the sun were again thwarted in their purpose, and turned and twisted about before they could glance upon the dark waters below.

Netta did not know all the tangles and tears she was to meet with when she set out on her walk. She had not visited this spot for some time, and then she had taken a more frequented path, on the other side of the ravine. She looked around, and down into the depth below, but she could see nothing but trees and brush-wood. She was not strong-minded, so she

began to be afraid. However, summoning up her courage, she pushed into a kind of broken stony path, down the side of the gully, and at the expense of a few more tears in the muslin dress, and some scratches on her hands, she succeeded in scrambling to the bottom.

Here was a wild and beautiful scene. A waterfall fell from a height, over rocks and brushwood, down into a foaming stream beneath, that rushed, in its turn, over huge stones through the dark ravine.

As Netta stood almost at the base of the water-fall, and on the edge of the rapid brook, something like reflection took possession of her volatile mind. There was a solemn gloom and grandeur about the scene that reminded her of the Sabbath she was desecrating, and therewith of her parents, and her duty to them. For a moment—only for a moment—she thought she would return, and strive to atone for the falsehood by giving up the object of her evening wandering. But a bright gleam of sunshine darted through the trees—the stream foamed and leapt towards it—the water-fall sparkled beneath—the arrowy fern glittered like gold,

and Netta's heart forgot her duty, and thought of her recreant lover. Her repentance must come in gloom, her sin in sunshine.

She plucked a bunch of the wild roses that hung around and above her, and dashed them petulantly into the stream. She watched them as their course was interrupted by the large masses of rock, and they were tossed here and there, by the angry, mischievous waters. At last they hung trembling on a huge stone, stranded, as it were, on their impetuous course. Again, for a moment, a serious comparison arose in her mind, and she wondered whether her life might be like that of the flowers she had cast away from her; whether she might be carried, by the force of contending passions, and left to wither upon some hard shore that as yet she knew not of. Such ideas naturally present themselves to the mind of all who are not wholly devoid of imagination; and when the rapid stream again bore away the bunch of roses, and Netta saw them no more, she had quite believed that such would be her course upon the troubled waters of the world.

But she was not long left to speculate upon

her future. Whilst her eyes were yet fixed upon the spot whence the roses had vanished, she felt a hand on her shoulder, heard a voice call her name, and starting round, saw her cousin Howel behind her. He had crept so softly down that she had not heard him, and she uttered a sharp cry that sounded like one of terror, as she suddenly felt his touch.

"A strange greeting, Netta," were the first words, after they had shaken hands.

"You frightened me, and why were you not here sooner? I have been waiting an hour," was the rejoinder, in a tone of voice that belied the radiant joy of the young face.

Suddenly Netta seemed to recollect something that brought a shadow over the sunshine.

"Cousin Howel, I—I am very sorry for you. Poor uncle Griff! How is aunt?—and you—you look ill, Howel; what is the matter?"

It was difficult for Netta to know what to say about the death of the miser. She was not sorry, and she could not tell how her cousin felt.

"Oh, yes; my mother is pretty well, I have

been ill, but shall soon be all right again. Netta, how long is it since we met?"

"A twelvemonth next Friday."

"You remember the day, dear Netta. Then you do not hate me, although they have done their best to make you do so, by calling me gambler, spendthrift, drunkard, and all the charming etceteras."

"Oh no, Howel."

"Take off that bonnet, and let me see if you are altered." He unfastened the strings, and let the long black curls fall over the girl's neck. "No, you are only prettier than ever, cousin Netta. How would you look in lace and pearls, and all the goodly array of a fine lady?"

"I don't know, Howel; but tell me what you wanted me for."

"Just let me twist this bunch of roses into your hair first, to see how an evening toilette would become my pretty cousin Netta."

Howel had torn a spray from the rose-bush at their back, and he inserted it carelessly amongst the curls.

"How well you look, Netta. I should like to see you in a ball-room. We will go together to plenty of balls, if you will only consent."

"I don't like those roses, cousin," said Netta hastily, "they are unlucky I think," and she tore them from her hair, and threw them, as she had done the previous ones, into the brook. "Now let us see where they will go."

"We have not time, Netta, and I do not know why I am fooling away the hours. You must answer all my questions truly and plainly. I am become a rich man, how rich I do not myself know; and I mean to let every one belonging to me, see that I can spend my money like a gentleman, and be as grand as those who have hitherto lorded it over me."

"Particularly the Rice Rices and Lady Mary Nugent," interrupted Netta.

"Would you like to be grander than they, Netta? have a finer carriage, more beautiful clothes, a handsomer house, plate, jewels, servants and all sorts of magnificence?"

"Oh yes, of all things in the world."

"Then you shall be my wife, Netta, and we will soon see whether we cannot be as grand as the grandest."

"Oh, cousin!"

"Well, dear Netta; tell me, are you changed?"

"No, cousin."

"If I ask your father's consent, and he gives it, will you marry me?"

"You know we settled that long ago, cousin Howel; but father will not consent, unless—unless—"

"Pshaw, but if I ask his consent, and he refuses it, will you marry me then, dear Netta, dear, dear cousin?"

Howel fixed his large, piercing eyes upon Netta, who coloured and trembled, and murmured, "Oh Howel, I don't know—how can I?"

"How can you? Who is to prevent you? We can marry and go abroad, and return, and ask pardon, and I will take a fine house, and they will be only too proud to own us?"

"Not father, Howel, unless—"

"Unless I become a steady fellow, and settle down, as I mean to do, if you will marry me. But if you refuse me, I shall just go on as I am, or put an end to my wretched life perhaps."

"Howel, don't be so wicked," cried Netta, bursting into tears.

"Then, Netta, you must give me your promise to be mine, whether your father consents or not, whenever I write you word, through my mother, that I will have a carriage ready at the turning near the turnpike. But I can settle all particulars at the proper time, provided only you promise. Remember, you have told me hundreds of times that you will be my wife, and neither father nor mother has a right to prevent it."

"I do not know—I cannot tell whether it would be right."

"Not right to save me from destruction, to make me what I ought to be, to cleave to your husband as if he were yourself, in spite of parents or relations! I am sure, Netta, that you are taught to do all this; besides, you cannot help it, if you love me. You know that I would have married you when I had nothing, as readily as I will now that I have tens of thousands, and surely this deserves a return?"

Netta began to sob.

"You know how it is, Howel, I am afraid of father, and could not bear to annoy mother, but—"

"But you love me better still, Netta; so do not cry, and we will be as happy as the day is long. Will you promise me?"

Netta sobbed on and hesitated.

"I am going to London to-morrow, cousin Netta, to pay debts, and make myself clear of the world. If you will promise, in a few months I will return for you; we will travel, we will do anything in the world you like; I shall have plenty of money, I shall probably write a book when we are abroad, which will make me famous as well as rich; we will come home and astonish the world. If you do not promise, I shall never come here again, and shall probably live a gay, wretched life on the continent, or elsewhere, and be really the good for-nothing fellow I am thought to be; will you promise, dear cousin Netta?"

Howel knew well how to assume a manner that should add force to the feelings he expressed, and rarely did he employ his powers of persuasion in vain, particularly with the fair sex, never with his cousin, to whom he was really attached, and who was wholly devoted to him.

"Netta," he added, in a low, sad voice, "I fear after all, you do not love me, and I have very few who care for me in this world."

"Do not say this, cousin," sobbed Netta, "you know I always promised—I always said—I—I—will do any thing in the world you wish me, cousin Howel."

"Even if your father refuses?"

"Yes, I will not care for any one but you."

"Thank you, dear Netta; now I know that we shall be happy, and you shall have everything you can desire."

"Stop, cousin; I shall not marry you because you are rich, or great, or likely to be as grand as other people—though I should like to put them down, just as well as you—but because we have loved each other ever since we were little children, and I could not care for any one else—not even if Sir Hugh Pryse were to ask me."

Howel was both touched and amused.

"You are a good, kind, little cousin, Netta; but what can you mean about Sir Hugh?"

Netta tossed her head, and looked vainglorious.

"Oh, I dined at Glanaravon Thursday, and the Rice Rices, and Nugents, and Sir Hugh were there; and Sir Hugh was very attentive to me, and said a great many things to me. And he has been at our house since, and has met me in the road, and been as polite as possible."

"But he is desperately in love with Miss Gwynne, or her fortune, so you need not alarm yourself, my little cousin."

"You need not alarm *yourself*, you ought to say," and Netta again tossed her head.

"Well, I am not jealous. Sir Hugh, with his loud voice, vulgar manners, and stupid fat face, could not light a candle to me, and as to his title, I will back my fortune against that."

"It sounds very grand to be called my lady." Netta said this to pique her cousin, and she succeeded; but she did not expect to provoke the storm that she raised. The dark brow lowered, and he said,

"Netta, I am in no mood to be trifled with. If you wish to be 'my lady,' take Sir Hugh, if he will have you; but I go halves with nobody. Now is the time to resolve; I shall never ask you again; and whatever your opinion may be upon

the subject, I consider that I do you as great honour in asking you to be my wife, as if there were fifty Sir Hughs at your feet."

It was now Netta's time to pout and look cross. She generally did before her private interviews with her cousin ended. Their quick tempers were sure to inflame each other.

"I am sure I don't care whether you ask me again or not. It is not such a great favour on your part."

"Very well; then 'your ladyship' has probably decided in favour of this," and Howel made a face to represent Sir Hugh, swelling his cheeks to their utmost extent. Netta tried to smother a laugh.

"I am sure he is quite as good looking as you are, with your cross face. You are enough to frighten one out of one's wits."

"If you had any, Miss Netta. But come, this is absurd. Is it to be Sir Hugh in perspective, or cousin Howel at once."

Netta was still pouting, fidgetting with her parasol, and restlessly pushing her foot through the grass and flowers, when they were startled by a voice crying,

"Is that you, Netta?"

Both looked up in affright, and to their extreme disgust, perceived their very sedate brother and cousin, Rowland, threading his way down the opposite side of the ravine. He was soon at the bottom, and in less than a minute had crossed from stone to stone over the brook, and stood by the side of his sister.

"Netta, what can you be doing here?" he asked abruptly.

"I came for a walk," was the somewhat hesitating reply.

"Then, perhaps, you will have no objection to walk home with me," said Rowland, looking reproachfully at Howel. He met a most defiant glance in return.

"Howel," he said, "I do not think my father would approve of Netta's meeting you here, and I therefore must beg to break up an interview that had been better avoided."

"Whatever right your father may have, Sir, to prevent my seeing your sister, at any rate you have none," was Howel's indignant reply.

"Then I shall take a brother's right, and in the absence of my father, assume his place. Netta,

you know you are doing wrong; come with me."

Netta hesitated, but her brother's manner was authoritative, and she felt that she dared not disobey.

"I tell you what it is, Rowland, you have always assumed a tone with me that I neither can nor will brook," passionately exclaimed Howel. "I beg you to account for your conduct, and to understand that I will have either an apology or satisfaction for your ungentlemanly proceedings."

"I never apologize when I have done no wrong; and as for satisfaction, as you understand it, I have not the power of making it. I will not desecrate the Sabbath by an unseemly quarrel amidst the most beautiful works of creation, nor offend my sister's ear by recrimination. If you have any real regard for her, you will allow her to go home quietly with me, and remember that we are all relations, and ought to be friends."

"Friends we can never be. The only friend I have in your family is Owen, except, perhaps, Netta, who is turned by one and the

other of you, like a weathercock by the winds."

"I beg your pardon, cousin Howel," began Netta.

"We have had enough of this," said Rowland calmly. "If you chose to come and see us as a relation, in a straightforward manner, Howel, we should be glad to see you, but underhand ways are equally disagreeable to us all."

"How remarkably condescending!" said Howel with a sneer. "But I will not waste time with a canting, methodist parson, like you. I wish you as many converts as you desire, but not myself amongst them. Remember! Netta! Good bye. I suppose your most excellent brother will allow us to shake hands."

Netta held out her hand, and as Howel shook it, he again repeated the word "remember." Rowland advanced a pace or two, and partly extended his hand. Howel turned abruptly away, and with a contemptuous glance, merely said "good day to you." The brother and sister took an opposite course to his, and had to cross the brook, whilst he pushed his way through the briers that had impeded Netta's

path. He turned and watched them as they stepped from stone to stone, and finally ascended the ravine. Netta looked round, and he kissed his hand to her, to which she responded by nodding her head; but Rowland neither turned to the right nor left.

"Meddling coxcomb!" he exclaimed, "what is there in him that commands the attention and respect that I fail to obtain with ten times his talents?"

He stood for a few minutes musing, whilst the music of the waterfall insensibly soothed his irritated mind.

"Why should I care for Netta, who could marry any one I like?" were his thoughts. "I suppose because she really loves me, and because they all oppose me. Well, supposing I do turn over a new leaf, and spend the gold my father got so usuriously, in doing good! That would be making a use of a miser's money, rarely, if ever, made before; and might be worth the trial, if only to work a new problem, whether ill-gotten wealth could conduce to moral health. I should like to out-Herod that puppy Rowland, and make a saint of

myself out of a sinner. That would be working out two problems at once. I wonder whether Netta will help me to solve them !"

Netta, meanwhile, was receiving a very severe lecture from her brother, to which she did not condescend to reply, until he spoke of what his father would say to her meeting Howel clandestinedly.

"I suppose you are not going to be cross enough to tell father," said Netta.

"I shall certainly think it my duty to tell him," was the reply.

"Then you are an unkind, unfeeling, unnatural, brother," cried Netta bursting into tears.

"Will you promise not to meet Howel again without my father or mother's consent?" asked Rowland, relenting.

"I won't promise anything; and Howel is a thousand times nicer and kinder than you are. You have no feeling for anyone. I wish Owen were at home."

"Netta, you are very unjust; you know I only wish your good."

"And I suppose you wish Howel's good, too. Just as his father is dead, and he meaning to be good, and only wishing to see me before he goes

to London, and having plenty of money to do what he likes, and intending to pay his debts with it, and, and—"

Here sobs and tears came to the rescue of the voluble words that would soon have worn themselves out—for Netta had no great flow of language.

Rowland was perplexed. He was fond of his sister; he wished Howel well; he did not know whether it would be best to let them marry or not. If they were prevented, they would either take French leave, or hate all their relations; and if they married they would not be happy, he was sure. But he knew it was wrong to deceive his parents. In this uncertain state of mind they reached home, through the little hawthorn lane before described. Mrs. Prothero was on the look out for them, she having returned from chapel and missed them.

Netta ran past her mother into the house, without replying to her question concerning her headache, and Rowland at once related to his mother what he had seen of Howel and Netta's private interview, which that good lady was very much distressed to hear.

CHAPTER IX.

THE IRISH BEGGAR.

GLANARAVON Farm was anything but a quiet home during the ensuing week. Mrs. Prothero thought it right to inform her husband of what had passed; and he blustered and raged even more than he had ever done about the Irish beggars. Every body thought proper to try to convert Netta, but none of them knew the indomitable obstinacy of her character, and all signally failed. Even Uncle and Aunt Jonathan had their turn, and drove over on purpose to canvass the matter; but as the elders disagreed upon the various points at issue, it was no wonder that all remained much as it was before the unfortunate meeting we have mentioned.

"For my part," said Mrs. Jonathan Pro-

thero, when all were assembled, except Netta, in family conclave, "I cannot see so much against the young man, after all. Such a fortune as his is not to be met with every day, and I must say he is very handsome and clever."

Here we must remark that this lady's sentitiments had undergone a change, since it had been rumoured that Howel was worth more than a hundred thousand pounds.

"I tell you what it is, ma'am," roared the farmer, "if he were worth his weight in gold, he 'ould'nt be a good match for any prudent 'ooman. To my certain knowledge he drinks and gambles, and he shall never have my consent to marry Netta, so long as I live, and you may tell him so."

"I do not know enough of him, Sir, to have any communication of the kind with him," said Mrs. Jonathan stiffly.

"My dear," interposed mild Mrs. Prothero, "if he gets steady, and settles down, it might be better to let them marry, than to make them miserable for life."

"*Study!* miserable! mother, you're a—I

beg your pardon, but when Howel's study, I'll turn to smoking cigars. Why the very night of his father's funeral, he was half drunk instead of being decent for once."

"He could'nt care much for his father, my dear; you must make allowances."

"An odd man, that Griff, brother David," said Mr. Jonathan Prothero, as if just awaking from a dream. "Do you remember when we were lads together, and used to go up to Garn Goch looking for treasures? I knew, even then, that it was an old British encampment, and began to speculate upon its date, and so on; you used to hunt rabbits, and provoke me by overturning the walls, but Griff got it into his head that there was money buried somewhere, and never ceased digging for it. At last he found an old coin of very ancient date, and seeing that I wished to have it, he bargained with me, until he got all the money I had for it. Of course the coin was worth any money, and satisfactorily proves that Garn Goch was an old British encampment, at the time of the invasion of the Romans."

"Well, brother, you *are* by the head! That

old coin is nothing but a well-used sixpence."

"I have every reason to believe, and I am supported in my opinion by various antiquaries, that it bears the inscription either of Cunobelin or Caractacus. There is a decided C, and we are told that money was coined in Britain in the time of Cunobelin."

"And how on earth did he get up to Garn Goch?"

"Why, you know that Caractacus commanded the Silures, or people of South Wales, against the Romans, and that they held out bravely. I have no shadow of doubt that Garn Goch was one of their strongholds."

"But what can Garn Goch have to do with Netta and Howel? Brother, I always shall say you are by the head with your antiquities."

"Well, I think you had better let them marry, I really do. It's no good opposing young people, when they will have their own way at last."

"I shan't send for you to consult with again. Mother, go and bring Netta here, and let us see what she has to say for herself."

"My dear Davy, would it not be better to speak to her privately?"

"Not a bit. I can't say a word when I am alone with her, but I could give her a bit of my mind when you are all present. Why don't you go, and not stand looking as if you was as much by the head as brother Jo."

Poor Mrs. Prothero perceived that her husband was determined to have Netta publicly reprimanded, so, much against her will, she left the room. Rowland was preparing to follow, not liking the prospect of a scene, when his father peremptorily called him back.

"Stay you, Sir. If you was the better for going to Oxford, you'd try to teach your sister how to behave, instead of cutting off the moment you're wanted."

"I really do not think, father, that a public reproof is likely to make Netta change her mind. You would do better to talk quietly to her."

Here Mrs Prothero returned, followed by Netta, looking as sulky as she possibly could, and with the traces of tears on her face. There was an awkward silence for a few seconds,

during which both Mr. Prothero and Netta were getting redder and redder, and their inner-man correspondingly choleric. At last the father began the strife.

"Now, I say, Miss Netta," there was a pause for a few minutes. "Do you hear, Miss?"

"Yes, father, I hear very well," said Netta, and muttered to herself in continuation, "who could help it?"

"You hear very well—I should think so. You hear a good deal you've no business to listen to. Do you mean to give up that scamp, Howel?"

No reply.

"Now it's no use for you to stand there and say nothing, for an answer I will have."

"I don't think he's a scamp," said Netta, boldly.

Poor Mrs. Prothero trembled, and looked imploringly at Netta.

"My dear Netta, you should not contradict your father," said Mrs. Jonathan with a severe look.

"You don't think he's a scamp. Then you mean to have him I suppose?" said Mr. Prothero.

"I didn't say that, father. But I don't see why I may not talk to my own cousin."

Everyone was surprised at Netta's answers. Like her father, she could talk better before numbers. She had done nothing but cry when her mother had reasoned with her.

"Very well, Miss. All I can say is, that if you meet him again I'll—I'll—I'll—" the good farmer did not know what he would do. He was not prepared to say.

"He is gone to London, father."

"Will you promise not to meet him any more, you good-for-nothing girl, you. You most disobedient daughter?"

Again Netta was silent.

"Will you promise your father, Netta," said Mrs. Prothero, gently, "not to meet Howel again, or have anything to say to him, without his consent?"

Still Netta was silent.

"He may reform, you know," suggested Mrs. Jonathan, "and then you may be allowed to marry."

"No chance of that," roared Mr. Prothero, advancing towards Netta, taking her by the

arm, and looking as if a few more of her rejoinders would bring her a good shaking. "Do you mean to promise, Miss?"

"Father, you're hurting me," said Netta, petulantly. "You needn't pinch me so."

Mr. Prothero relaxed his hold. He doated on this obstinate, pretty, wilful child of his—the only girl; and whose temper was the very fac-simile of his own.

"It's you're hurting me most, Netta, by rushing into certain misery. Will you promise?"

Again he took hold of the arm.

"One would think you were a Papist, father, and this the Inquisition," said Netta, growing learned under the torture of her father's grasp.

"Well said, Netta," broke in Mr. Jonathan, aroused by any allusion to any subject out of the present. "A cruel court that; perhaps more properly called Jesuitical than Papistical."

Mr. Prothero gave Netta a slight shake, which shook more passion into both of them, and frightened Mrs. Prothero.

"Once for all, Netta, will you promise to give up that scamp of a cousin of yours, Howel Jenkins?" roared the father.

"I won't promise anything at all," replied Netta, doggedly; and freeing herself from her father, she ran to her uncle, as if for protection.

"You won't!" said Mr. Prothero, pursuing her, "then I tell you what it is. The moment you are known to keep company with him, you may find some other home than this; and if you determine to marry him, you shall be no longer a daughter of mine. I'll never, as long as I live—"

"Hush, hush, David, hush please," said Mrs. Prothero, putting her hand on his arm. 'Netta will not disobey us, I am sure. But it is her obstinate temper; she never would say anything she was commanded to say."

"Then you ought to have taught her better. She is a good-for-nothing girl, and I'll—"

"Netta, you had better leave the room," said Rowland, opening the door, through which Netta gladly escaped. "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath," he added, turning to his father. "You will do nothing with her at present. She is worked up to a spirit of resistance by too much argument, and the more you say, the more obstinate she will become."

"You are all as obstinate as mules," said Mr. Prothero, "I can't think who you turn after. And then to have the impudence to say I was a Papist! Why I'd rather be a Methody Preacher any day. And you to encourage her, brother Jonathan. You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

Brother Jonathan started up from his dream of Garn Goch and the Inquisition, to repudiate the imputation of encouragement.

"I was merely glad to find that she knew anything about the Inquisition, and had any information at all in her head; generally speaking, women know so little. I assure you, David, it was far from me to wish to encourage her in disobedience, or to offend you; so give me your hand."

The brothers shook hands very warmly, and in so doing, the contrast between them was very great. The farmer I have already described. The clergyman was a remarkable specimen of the "Dry-as-dust" species. Very tall, very thin, with very loose joints, seemingly hung together on wires, and a very prominent nose. He had acquired the habit of poking his chin and

looking on the ground, as if he were always in search for something, which he possibly was, as he never despaired of finding some antiquity or curiosity at any moment. It must not be augured from his devotion to antiquarian lore that he made a bad clergyman. On the contrary, he was always ready at the call of the poorest parishioner, regular in his visits to the sick, charitable in no mean degree, and humble in his deportment to rich and poor. True, his sermons were somewhat dry, and occasionally too learned for the greater portion of his flock; but he made up for this by the simplicity of his conversation when he talked to them at their own houses.

He seldom was seen without a sort of school-boy satchel at his back, containing a small hammer, and other useful tools, which, it was believed, had actually carried his lesson-books years ago. All the villagers knew his strong-and-weak point, and he rarely appeared amongst them without having various stones and imaginary curiosities presented to him, particularly by the young people. Many of these stones found their way into his bag, and it was not

to be wondered at that he had a somewhat round back, as he frequently carried a load upon it, that a beast of burden would not have rejoiced in.

He and Mrs. Jonathan were a remarkable pair; one of those ill-assorted couples that you wonder at. "How in the world did they come together?" was the usual question, the philosophic reply to which would have been, that theirs was actually one of the "Matches made in heaven." The gentleman got money to enable him to follow the bent of his genius without anxiety for his daily bread, and therewith a stirring wife to take care of him and his house; the wife got her great desideratum, a husband, and therewith the desideratum of all women, her own way.

But we must return to Netta, and the other belligerents. As nothing more was to be made of her at present, they let her alone, perhaps the wisest thing they could do, and sat down to dinner. Netta declined eating, and consequently was left to her own reflections. Mr. Prothero inquired anxiously of his wife, when he had cooled a little, whether he had really

hurt Netta when he took hold of her arm; to which Mrs. Prothero replied, with unusual severity, "No, perhaps it had been better if he had; she wanted some trial or punishment to bring down her proud spirit."

In the course of the evening, a little before Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan left Glanaravon to return home, Miss Gwynne came to enquire for the poor Irish girl. She joined the party in the parlour for a short time, and gave a message from her father to Rowland, to the effect that he was very anxious for another game of chess, and begged him to come and dine at the Park on the morrow. Of course Rowland was only too happy, and the rest of the party too proud.

"Papa is disgusted at your having beaten him the other night," said Miss Gwynne to Rowland.

"I think Mr. Gwynne got tired," said Rowland modestly.

"What affectation," thought Miss Gwynne, as she said, "oh no! he says you are the best player."

"I disclaim that entirely," said Rowland.

"I merely beat two games out of three, and we had not time for another."

Rowland had been, according to promise, to dine and play chess with Mr. Gwynne; Miss Gwynne had dined with them, but had left them after dinner to follow their own devices, whilst she had followed hers, and did not reappear during the evening. Mr. Gwynne had reproached her for her absence, and she had declared that she hated to be so long without talking, and that chess and young Prothero were perfect antidotes to conversation.

"That ancient, Saracenic game, as Mr. Jonathan Prothero calls it, played by a Goth," she said, "is beyond my store of politeness."

Mrs. Prothero and Miss Gwynne went to see the poor Irish girl; they found her rather better, and able to speak to them with some degree of composure. The fever and its accompanying delirium had abated, and the danger was past; but, as is usual in such cases, extreme weakness was the result.

"God bless you, my ladies," she murmured, as Miss Gwynne stooped over her to enquire how she did, and Mrs. Prothero took her

thin hand. "I am better, thank ye; I can see and understand, and know now all that you have done for the wretched beggar."

Here the poor girl's tears began to flow.

"We only wish to see you get well," said Miss Gwynne, softly, "and then we can help you to find your friends."

"I have no friends in the world Miss asthore; my father died years ago, and my mother, brother, and sister all died of this horrible famine and pestilence! oh me! oh me!"

The tears flowed still faster, and Mrs. Prothero begged her to be silent, and not to excite herself; but with restless eagerness she went on, as if anxious to pour forth her sorrows whilst she felt the strength to do so. It was remarkable that her English was very good, and that, with the exception of an occasional Irish epithet of endearment, you would scarcely have discovered her country. Indeed, the Welsh peculiarities of expression and accent sometimes appeared, so that it would have been difficult to say where she was born or brought up.

"I am going to look for my friends, if I live, and then, may be, I may be able to repay you for your kindness to me, a poor, wretched, wanderer on the face of God's earth. If you 'll be pleased to listen whilst I have the strength, I will tell you my story.

"My mother was a Welshwoman, born in some part of South Wales; she was the daughter of a clergyman, and respectably brought up. Her father taught her a great many things that we ignorant people in Ireland used to think a great deal of. Oh, she was a good, and tender mother to me, ladies avourneen.

"My father was an Irishman, and a fine, handsome man. He was a soldier—a corporal in the Welsh fusiliers—and used to be called Corporal O'Grady. He was going through this country to Ireland, to visit his friends, on leave, when he first saw mother, and fell in love with her, and she with him. She knew that her father would not be willing that they should marry, so she ran away with him to Ireland. They travelled about for some time with his regiment, but after I was born, mother went to settle in Ireland with father's family, and there

she had three other children, two boys and a girl. After this my father was wounded in India, and got his discharge and his half pay. He became a kind of under-agent for a gentleman that lived in England, so we were very well off as long as he lived; but he died when I was about twelve years old, and then mother did not well know what to do. I remember my father's death, and all our trouble, as if it was yesterday.

"She set up a little school, and for some years did pretty well. She could teach all that the farmers' daughters wanted to learn, and I helped her; so we managed to live. It was a hard struggle sometimes, but everybody was kind to widow O'Grady and her orphans; God reward them!

"But the bad time came for poor Ireland; the famine visited us, and then the pestilence! Ye have heard enough of the horrors, without doubt, but not half of what they really were. We were all starving, dying—I saw enough people die to make me wish myself dead hundreds of times, to be hidden from the sight; but I was fated to live. You ladies, in your

charity, have saved me again ; but oh ! if it were not wicked, I should wish myself with my mother, brothers and sister in Heaven."

Here the poor girl's sobs choked her speech, and Mrs. Prothero entreated her not to proceed.

" Only one word more, my ladies, and I have done. When they were all gone—all—all—and I only left, I did not care what became of me. I went about amongst those stricken down with the fever; but, woe is me, I never caught it. I fasted from morning to night, day after day, but I could not die of starvation : nothing would kill me. I was alone in the wide world, yet it would not please God to take me to another, much as I prayed to Him.

" Before mother died, she told me to go into Wales, and try to find if she had any relations left. It was all she said, or had strength for ; and before she got ill, she seldom talked of her friends. All that I know of them, I heard from my father when I was quite a child. He told me that mother had written to her father when she settled in Ireland, and that her letter had been returned with a note, saying that he

was dead, and his only son gone away, no one knew where. This was her brother, and my uncle, but I do not know where to find him, only I am come to seek them that I may do her bidding."

"And what was your mother's name?" asked Mrs. Prothero.

"Margaret Jones, ma'am."

"My poor girl, there are hundreds of that name in South Wales. But we will make enquiries for you, and when you are better—"

"I am better now, thank you ma'am, To-morrow I think I may go on my way. I would not trouble you any more—a poor beggar like me, is not fit—oh dear! oh dear!"

"Now I insist on your being quiet, and going to sleep, and forgetting all those horrors," said Miss Gwynne, assuming her most decided voice to hide her emotion. "You are not to go away to-morrow; but I dare say in a few days you will be able to do so, andwe can help you a little. But your best plan now, is to get as strong as you can whilst you have the opportunity," and herewith Miss Gwynne put a large spoonful of jelly into the girl's mouth.

Mrs. Prothero was wiping her eyes, and stifling a rising sob behind the curtain, which caused Miss Gwynne to become very severe, and to utter something about giving way to foolish weakness, which aroused Mrs. Prothero, and made the patient bury her head beneath the bed-clothes.

Miss Gwynne beckoned to Mrs. Prothero, and they left the room together. Upon asking for Netta, Miss Gwynne was let into the secret of the family troubles and consultations, and greatly fearing to be made a party in the lecturings overhanging the luckless head of the offender, she took a hasty leave of Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan, and begging Mrs. Prothero not to be too hard upon Netta, or to let her son Rowland preach too many sermons, went her very independent way.

CHAPTER X.

THE SQUIRE'S DAUGHTER.

"You will oblige me by remaining at home this evening, my dear," said Mr. Gwynne to his daughter.

"That I assuredly shall, papa," was the reply, "for dear Miss Hall is coming to-day, and that princess of bores, Miss Nugent, has invited herself to tea. I certainly do wish Rowland Prothero would fall in love with her. She is quite ready for the *premier venu*, be he prince or peasant."

"Does not Lady Mary come, my dear?"

"No, I am thankful to say she is gone to spend a few days with the Llanfawr family."

"I am very glad Miss Hall is coming, Freda. I wish she would live with you—it would be very pleasant, and a protection for you, and all that sort of thing."

"Oh, do ask her, dear papa. I have tried a thousand times to persuade her to come here, and live with us for ever; but I think she will not come on my invitation."

"I could not possibly ask her, my dear. I should break down at the first word; we never were very familiar. She is stiff, and I am nervous—and—and—I really could not summon courage."

Miss Hall had been Miss Gwynne's governess during a few years of her education era, and had succeeded in entirely gaining her affections, as well as a small portion of ascendancy over her determined will. She had left Glanaravon to reside with an aged father, who, having lately died, left her again under the necessity of seeking a situation Miss Gwynne had invited her to pay her a visit, and she was to arrive almost immediately.

She did arrive whilst they were talking about her, and as the carriage, that had been sent to meet her, drove up to the door, out flew Freda in great excitement, and scarcely allowed her *ci-devant* governess to alight, before she was overwhelming her with embraces. Mr.

Gwynne followed somewhat more leisurely, and received Miss Hall with his usual nervous reserve of manner, but great courtesy. She responded most warmly to the embraces of Freda, and quietly to the welcome of Mr. Gwynne.

We will not give a minute description of the new comer, because she is not quite a person to be described. She is neither very good-looking nor very plain, neither very old nor very young, neither very tall nor very short, neither very talkative nor very reserved, neither very much over-dressed nor very much under-dressed, neither very merry nor very grave. Freda used to say that she was the personification of gentle dignity and serenity, and in the days of her Italian studies, called her occasionally *La Dignità*, but more frequently *La Serenità*, which epithet would sometimes be abbreviated into Serena, or Sera, or Nita, or anything but Miss Hall, which the love of the impulsive pupil, so hard to obtain, and so great when obtained, thought much too formal.

When Freda took Miss Hall to the delightful apartment she had been adorning for her for a

week past, the first impulse of the older lady was to throw herself upon the neck of the younger, and burst into tears.

"Dearest Serena, I have been so very sorry for you," was all that Freda could say.

For a minute there was silence, when Miss Hall recovering herself, said,

"Dear Freda, this is all so kind of you. If anything could console me for the loss of my last earthly support, it is such affection as yours."

We will pass over the long conversation of those two friends, its melancholy and its mirth, for there was much of both, and bring them to the dinner-table, and Messrs. Gwynne and Rowland Prothero.

They were rather a formal quartett, and at first conversation did not flow easily. Mr. Gwynne's nerves, Rowland's embarrassment, Miss Hall's natural depression of spirits, and Freda's resolution not to make herself agreeable to a person she was determined to consider conceited, were bad ingredients for a dish of good sociable converse. By degrees, however, they thawed a little. Mr. Gwynne wished to say

something that would set his young chess opponent at his ease, and said the very thing likely the most to confuse a shy man. He made a personal remark and paid a compliment.

"I am sure your uncle, and—and your father, of course, must have been much gratified, and so forth, at your gaining that fellowship at Oxford."

"I think you labour under a mistake," said Rowland, looking more than usually confused, when he saw Miss Gwynne's eyes turned upon him, "I merely gained a scholarship at Rugby, which is really nothing. I did not even try for a fellowship."

"Conceited," thought Freda, "I suppose he thinks if he had tried, he would have got one"

"Were you not at Baliol?" asked Mr. Gwynne.

"Yes, I went there because my aunt had a fancy for the college, her father having been there; otherwise I should have gone to Jesus College, and tried for a Welsh fellowship, which is more easily obtained, because there are few competitors."

"Did you know anything of Mr. Neville,

Sir Thomas Neville's son?" asked Miss Hall.

"Yes, I was introduced to him through some friends of my aunt's, and we became very intimate. He was very kind to me."

"Is he clever?"

"Very. I think he has very fine talents, and is likely to shine at the bar, if he continues in his resolution to go to it. I have just had an invitation to spend a few days with him, but do not think I shall have time before I go to be ordained."

"Has your aunt settled the curacy?" asked Freda, with a wicked laugh in the corner of her eye.

"I think and hope so," replied Rowland, answering the visible smile by a blush, "she has done her utmost to obtain it for me."

"Ah! she was well connected, and has some interest, and a—a great deal of energy, and all that sort of thing; I should think she was a clever, or, I mean a—an enterprising woman."

Mr. Gwynne hesitated as he said this, not admiring the lady in question, yet thinking it incumbent upon him to pay her a compliment.

His daughter glanced enquiringly at Rowland, as if wondering what he could say to so dubious a speech. He appeared equally at a loss, and as he turned from Mr. Gwynne for a moment, caught Miss Gwynne's mirthful eye. He could not help smiling, but said, with much spirit, "My aunt has been very good to me, Mr. Gwynne, and I owe her a heavy debt of gratitude, for giving me at least the opportuuity of getting on in the world."

"Well, I like him for that," thought Freda, "and are you going to London?" she asked aloud, with a degree of interest.

"I am to be ordained by the Bishop of London to a city curacy," was the reply.

"Will you allow me to take wine with you, and wish you success, Sir?" said Mr. Gwynne, "who knows but we may see you Bishop of London some day. Miss Hall, Freda, will you join us?"

Mr. Gwynne became quite animated; he felt proud that the son of his most respectable tenant should be going to take a London curacy.

Freda bent rather less stiffly than usual to

Mr. Rowland Prothero. She was annoyed with herself for feeling more inclined to be friendly with him since she had heard that he was intimate with young Neville, and was to be ordained by the Bishop of London.

There was more conversation, which it is unnecessary to repeat; but in due course of time the ladies retired to the drawing-room, where they found Miss Nugent awaiting them.

"Whose *beaux yeux* do you think we have in the dining-room?" asked Freda.

"I am thure I cannot gueth; perhapth Thir Hugh Prythe's," Miss Nugent lisped.

"Do you call his *beaux yeux?* Little ferret eyes like his! No, guess again."

"Young Rithe Rithe?"

"Wrong again."

"Not Captain Lewith?"

"Some one much nearer home."

"I do not know any one elthe, exthept that Mr. Howel Jenkinth, who, they thay, will be quite a grand man."

"I do not even know him. What do you think of his cousin, Mr. Rowland Prothero?"

"I never thought about him; mamma thayth

he ith very handthome, but I am thure he ith very *gauche* and countrified."

"Oh, I am sure he is not. You are greatly mistaken, he has been in excellent society, and is going at once to a London living—curacy I mean, but it is all the same."

Miss Hall looked rather amazed at Freda. A few hours before, she had been lamenting the necessity of entertaining that "stupid young Prothero."

"Ith he really?" said Miss Nugent. "The London curateth are tho interethting. There ith one at Tht. Jameth'th, with a pale face and black hair, and thuch a beautiful voice. Ith Mr. Prothero going to Tht. Jameth'th?"

"You shall ask him yourself; I dare say he will like you to seem interested, particularly as you know the London curates."

"Are you going to Tht. Jameth'th, Mr. Prothero?" enquired Miss Nugent, when that young man entered the room shortly after.

"I beg your pardon, I do not quite understand what you mean."

"Mith Gwynne thaid you were going to a

London curacy; I thought it might be Tht. Jameth'th."

"I believe not. If I go to London, I shall probably be in the city—a very different locality to St. James's."

"Oh! when we are in town, we alwayth go to Tht. Jameth'th; it ith thuch a nice church."

Freda perceived that Miss Nugent's interest fell as soon as she found that Rowland was going into the city. She also saw a smile lurking about Rowland's mouth when he said,

"I have never been in London, but I suppose St. James's is one of the fashionable parts."

"Oh yeth, very. Numberth of grand people go to Tht. Jameth'th; don't you with you were going to be curate there instead of the Thity."

Rowland was grave in a moment.

"I should wish to labour wherever there is the largest field to work in, Miss Nugent, whether in the city or St. James's."

"Yeth, to be sure, I believe there are loths of poor people in Tht. Jameth'th. I onthe went by chance into thuch a nathty alley clothe by Tht. Jameth'th Threet. Thuch dirty children!"

"Alas," said Miss Hall, coming to the rescue

of Rowland, who was looking quite distressed, "we cannot go many steps in the London parishes, be they fashionable or unfashionable, without entering a 'vineyard' amply wide enough for any one who wishes to work in it, whether priest or layman."

Rowland looked round brightly and pleasantly at Miss Hall. Freda could not help noticing the sudden animation in a face that she had considered a minute ago almost heavy.

"When are we to have our game at chess?" interrupted Mr. Gwynne. "The poor of London is a subject I quite dread to hear discussed, it is so hopeless. One can do no good, and what is the use of tormenting oneself about it, here in Wales."

"Oh, papa! they want very decided measures; plenty of police, active magistrates, and I don't know what besides," said Freda.

"Would you allow me to supply what you have omitted?" asked Rowland, "they want christian sympathy, christian teaching, brotherly kindness, and the aid of the rich and powerful."

Freda considered Rowland's finale to her

entence impertinent, and was about to take up the defence of her magisterial system very warmly, when she met a glance so earnest and appealing, and withal so beautiful in its earnestness, that she could not find in her heart to answer it by a hard look or word ; so for want of better reply, she went to prepare the chess table.

" I wish you joy of that Saracenic game," she said ironically, as her father and Rowland sat down to chess, not, perhaps, quite by the wish of one of the pair.

" I thought you liked chess, Freda?" said Miss Hall.

" Oh, pretty well, when I can get any one who does not beat me. I hate so to lose a game, that I think it is better not to play at all, than to run the risk of feeling in a passion, and not being able to give vent to it."

" Perhaps the better plan would be to control the passion," said Miss Hall.

" Impossible ! I am sure it must be just such a feeling as a good general would have, if he lost a battle, after having done his best to win it."

"I suppose the best general is always the calmest, both in victory and defeat," murmured Rowland, without taking his eyes from his men.

"If you would oblige me by not talking," said Mr. Gwynne, nervously, "I can never play if my opponent talks."

"I beg your pardon," said Rowland, "I know it is very disagreeable.

"Are you too tired to visit some of your old haunts, Serenità?" said Freda. "By the way that would be a good name for Mr. Prothero's ideal general."

"Not quite," began Rowland, but was silent in a moment.

"My dear Freda, are you going out? I really am sorry to stop your amusement, and so forth, but I cannot play," said Mr. Gwynne.

"Exactly, papa, we will go directly if Miss Hall likes."

The three ladies left the room, and as Rowland glanced after them, he very decidedly wished that he might be permitted to accompany them. One other great wish he also had at his heart, the conversion of Miss Gwynne

to a purer and higher tone of mind. He did not, we grieve to say, bestow a similar pastoral thought on Miss Nugent.

"That position of your queen at such an early stage of the game, must be an oversight, I think. Excuse me, but I could not take such an unfair advantage," said Mr. Gwynne.

Rowland was roused at once. He gave himself up to his game, and an hour afterwards, when the ladies returned from their walk, and candles were ordered, it was still in progress, but he had the best of it.

"Will you sing for us, Serena?" said Freda.

"Will you sing a duet with me?" was the reply.

The duet was sung, and another and another and another, and Rowland lost the game.

Mr. Gwynne arose, very much elated, and rubbing his hands gently, according to his wont.

"How do you feel, general, defeated?" asked Freda.

"Very much like a subaltern," said Rowland.

"Do you sing Mr. Prothero?" asked Miss Hall, "all the Welsh are so musical that I think there are few who have not voices."

"I sometimes sing chaunts, and sacred music; but I know very few songs, and those old ones."

"Perhaps you will take the bass of some of these old glees. Here is 'The Chough and Crow.' 'When shall we three meet again,' 'The Canadian Boat-song,' 'The Sicilian Mariner,' and I know not how many more," said Miss Hall, turning over the leaves of a thick old book, full of glees.

"I will do my best," said Rowland, and the glees began in earnest.

All the Protheros were musical, and Rowland had a very fine clear voice; Miss Hall was right in saying that the Welsh are a musical people. Rowland was a happy example. He had been studying Church music a good deal, and learning to take different parts, so he acquitted himself very creditably in the glees, all of which he had either tried, or heard sung. Freda was quite astonished. She had a great taste for music herself, and a good voice, but would never

sing with any one but Miss Hall, a piece of wilfulness that her father occasionally reproached her with. The addition of Rowland was rather agreeable to her, as it enabled them to sing the glees that she was fond of. She no longer objected to the chess, and when her father proposed giving Rowland his revenge on the morrow, she added, "And then we can wind up with a few more glees."

Rowland bowed his thanks and departed.

During the ensuing month, there were frequent chess, and glee-clubs at Glanaravon. What the effect such associations had upon Rowland, he never confided to any one, but when Miss Hall expressed her opinion that "Mr. Prothero was a sensible unaffected young man, but shy," Freda condescended to say, "Well, he is not quite such a Goth, or half as affected as I fancied he was, but he has a very good opinion of himself, nevertheless."

In due course, Rowland went to London to be ordained, and so ended the chess and glee clubs.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SAILOR.

ARGUMENT and persuasion were alike thrown away upon Netta Prothero. She would make no promises, no concessions; she stood her ground with the obstinacy of a Cadwallader. Her father stormed for about a week, when he got tired of the subject, and of Netta's resolute manner, and cross face, and gave it up. He heard that Howel had started for London, having put his affairs in the hands of an attorney, and that it was not at all unlikely that he would marry some lady of rank. He laughed heartily at the notion. It was also rumoured that he meant to return and take a place in the neighbourhood, stand for the county, and be one of the greatest men in South Wales. In short, the Enchanter, the Merlin, the Open

Sesame, the Omnipotent Sorcerer, *Gold*, was to work the miracles to which Howel had been so long looking forward. And the gossips were not far wrong. Gold is, truly, a famous master-key to all hearts, and to all companies.

But whilst the gossips—and who is not a gossip in a country neighbourhood? whilst the gossips were settling Howel's future so comfortably and respectably for him, he was dispensing his gold amongst gamblers and the like—paying debts of honour as they are called.

However, Mr. Prothero thought it not unlikely that what the gossips said might prove true, and was therefore tolerably comfortable about his spoilt pet, Netta. When his anger and her pouting had subsided, matters went on much as usual for a time at the farm. Even the blaze that was kindled at the incursion of the Irish girl, had well nigh gone out, and Mr. Prothero had nearly forgotten her existence.

She, meanwhile, was slowly recovering under Mrs. Prothero's kind care. One day, that good woman was sitting with her in the little room that had been allotted to her, and said,

"Is there anything you could think of that would amuse you, my dear?"

"If I might—" Gladys began and paused.

"Pray go on, do not be afraid to ask."

"If I might only make up that cap for you, ma'am, I should be so proud. I used to make caps at home."

Mrs. Prothero was manufacturing a cap for herself, and had a certain womanly fear as to how it would turn out, if transferred to other fingers; but she did not like to refuse the request, so she resigned it into the thin hands of Gladys. She was almost immediately called away, and did not return for some hours. When she again visited her invalid, she found her quite excited with her work, that she had just completed.

"Oh! what a pretty cap!" said Mrs. Prothero, quite astonished at the taste displayed. "I must just run and show it to Netta—I am so much obliged to you."

Mrs. Prothero left the room, and soon returned, followed by her daughter.

"Can you trim bonnets as well as make

caps ?" asked Netta, forgetful of infection when her personal interest was involved.

"Yes, Miss, a little," replied Gladys, modestly.

"I wish you would trim mine for me to-morrow."

"Oh, thank you, Miss! If you will only let me try, I shall be so grateful."

"She does not seem like a beggar, after all," thought Netta. "Who taught you to work so nicely?" she said aloud.

"I was apprenticed to a mantua-maker and milliner for six months, Miss, and after that I worked for the neighbours."

"How could you work for them, when they are all rags and tatters?"

"There were some farmer's wives, Miss," said Gladys, colouring slightly, "and the clergyman's family, and the steward's—I used to work for them."

"Then how came you here?"

"People couldn't work, or pay for work, Miss, when everyone was starvin' around them."

Mrs. Prothero looked at Netta reproach-

fully. The girl was not really hard-hearted, so she changed the subject.

"I dare say you can knit, and mark samplers?" she said.

"Yes, Miss, mother taught us to do that at school."

"I think, Netta," interrupted Mrs. Prothero, "that she must go to bed now. She looks tired, and has been up long enough."

"What a fuss mother makes about the girl," muttered Netta as she left the room.

The following day, the bonnet was most tastily trimmed under Netta's superintendance, and work enough hunted up to employ Gladys for a month, at least. Netta even found an old cotton gown, which she presented to her in return for her labours. It was not long enough, but Gladys thought she might be able to lengthen it.

Whilst her convalescence, and Netta's needlework were thus progressing, there was an arrival at the farm. One evening, the family were assembled in the large hall, their usual sitting-room. Mr. Prothero was reading the newspaper at a small round table, with an

especial candle to himself. His worthy wife was mending or making shirts. At another round table not very far off, Netta had some work in her hands, and one of Captain Marryat's novels open before her.

"Why don't you do your work instead of reading those trashy stories, Netta?" suddenly exclaimed Mr. Prothero.

"I am working, father," said Netta.

"Pretty working, sure enough. What nonsense have you got reading now?"

"Peter Simple, father, oh it is so funny."

"Ah! it was that stupid stuff, and 'The Pilot,' and 'The Spy,' and I don't know what else, that sent Owen off to sea. I suppose it's there you learn all your nonsense. I wish you would read the cookery book, and help your mother to take care of the house and dairy, instead of doing what's no good in the world."

A loud knocking at the door interrupted a rather pert reply.

"Who on earth is that, at this time of night?" exclaimed the farmer throwing down his paper.

"Shanno," called Mrs. Prothero, into the passage, "ask who it is, before you open the door."

"It's no great things," suggested Netta, "for they're knocking with a stick, and not with the knocker."

"Name o'goodness, what's the row!" said the farmer.

"Who's there?" demanded Shanno, in the passage.

The answer did not reach the hall, but Shanno came rushing in, "It's them Irishers again, master, upon my deet, they do be here for ever."

"Give me my stick!" exclaimed Mr. Prothero, "if I don't give them a lesson, my name isn't David."

He seized a stick, and went into the passage, followed by his wife, murmuring, "Oh, David bach," and by Netta as far as the door, from which she peeped down the passage.

"Who's there?" roared the farmer, in a voice of thunder.

"May it please yer honor, I'm cowld and hungry. Long life to yer honor and her leddy-

ship, if ye'll only give the loan o' yer barn, or may be yer loft, or—"

"I'll show you the way to my barn, you idle, good-for-nothing scamp," cried Mr. Prothero, opening the door, and levelling a blow with his stick into the moonlight, that must infallibly have knocked down any one less agile than the man for whom it was intended. As it was, the unwelcome visitor jumped aside, whilst the portly farmer tripped himself up by his own impetuosity, and fell upon the threshold. Mrs. Prothero and Netta screamed, and Shanno took hold of the beggar's arm, to prevent his escape. But the beggar had pulled Mr. Prothero up, and was beginning to sympathize with him in broad brogue, when that valiant anti-Irishman got hold of his stick again, and began to belabour the unoffending party's back most manfully.

"Enough's as good as a faist, yer honour," cried the stranger, skipping from side to side, and evading the blows very skilfully, "pon my sowl, yer honor 'ud do for a fair or a wake. 'Tis madam, as has the heart an' the conscience for the poor Irish, an' Miss, too, asthore!"

The impudent fellow ran round to where Netta stood, who, in terror, went into the house, followed by the man, and after him, the rest in full hue and cry.

"Tin thousand pardons, Miss," said the man, taking off his hat and confronting Netta.

"Owen! Owen!" screamed Netta. "For shame upon you, you naughty boy," and therewith Netta and the unexpected guest were hugging one another most lovingly.

"'Tis the mother will give the poor Irisher a lodgin' and a drop o' the cratur," cried that mother's well-beloved eldest born, almost catching her up in his arms, and smothering her with kisses. "And the masther isn't so hard-hearted as he looks," he added, shaking the astonished farmer by the hand.

"Owen! ought'nt you to be ashamed of yourself?" cried the farmer, laughing aloud, and rubbing his right leg.

"Not kilt intirely, yer honour! didn't I take you all in, that's all!"

Where did you come from? How did you come? When did you leave your ship? were

the questions reiterated on all sides of the welcome guest.

"I'll tell you all that to-morrow. At present I am dying of cowld and hunger, and hav'nt broke me fast since morning. Let me show you how the locker stands."

Owen emptied his pockets, and from a corner of one of them, turned out a solitary halfpenny.

"I shouldn't have had that, if old Nanny Cwmgwyn hadn't given it to me just now. But I'll tell you my story to-morrow in character."

"Not an improved one any how," said Mr. Prothero with a gathering frown.

"Don't lecture to-night, Datta bach; you shall have an hour on purpose to-morrow, when I promise to listen to edification. 'Pon my word it is pleasant to be at home again. How I long to sleep in my comfortable bed once more."

Poor Mrs. Prothero's countenance fell, and Netta looked malicious.

"Not likely to sleep there to-night, boy," said the farmer: "mother has got visitors."

"Visitors!" exclaimed Owen, "and gone to bed already! what sleepy people."

"Some of your friends of the cowld and hungry sort," said the farmer.

"Not mother's old friends, and my relations, the Irish beggars?"

"Singular number, and a young lady!" said the farmer with a sneer and a puff of the tobacco with which he was beginning to solace himself, at the sight of the bread and cheese that were appearing.

"A poor girl, Owen, who was taken ill," said Mrs. Prothero.

"I understand it all, mother; never mind, she's welcome for once, provided I get a good bed, but to-morrow she must turn out."

"Very well, my dear," said Mrs. Prothero submissively; for Owen, though a prodigal, was the eldest son, and generally had his own way.

"Now don't be frightened at my appetite," said Owen, sitting down to cold meat, and strong ale.

"Bless you and your appetite," said Mrs. Prothero, kissing his forehead; upon which he

jumped up again, and hugged her with all his heart.

"Now, Netta, let us go and see about the sheets," said Mrs. Prothero, smoothing her dress.

The mother and daughter left the room, and were not long in preparing the best bed-room for Owen. This done, they hastened back to the hall, where they found diminished ham, and increased smoke, Owen having lighted a short pipe, and taken to smoking with his father, over a large jug of ale.

"We must have your adventures to-night, Owen," cried Netta, as she entered, "and you must tell us why you came home so very shabby. I suppose you have been wrecked on a desert island."

"To be sure," said Owen, laying down the pipe. "But I must go out and find my wardrobe, and all my valuables, that my hospitable Daddy there, caused me to throw down, when he gave me such a warm welcome."

Owen disappeared, but soon returned with a box in his hands, apparently of some weight,

and a bundle slung across his shoulder, suspended on a walking stick. Putting down the box he began to sing.

"A handkerchief held all the treasure I had,"

whilst he flourished his walking stick and bundle over his mother's head. When he had finished his song, he put down his bundle and went to the box.

"I have shown you the size of my wardrobe, now allow me to shew off the rest of my fortune and stock in trade. Father, you shall have the first peep. Let me put my box on the table, and the light—so. Now, stoop, so—look through that glass, so—and—have you got the right focus? Yes!—To the right, you beholds the gallant 'ero, Lord Nelson, him as lost his harm, a just fallin' in the harms of Capen Ardy and Victory—To the left—but first his Lordship is a singin' 'England expects every man to do his dooty.' To the left. . ."

"Well, if that isn't as pretty a picture and as much like life as any thing I ever saw," said Mr. Prothero, interrupting the

showman. "Come here, mother; Netta, look here."

Mrs. Prothero peeped into the box, which was nothing more nor less than a penny peep-show, and Owen began again....

"To the right you beholds," when Netta, impatient, looked through a second glass, and exclaimed in extasy, "Where did you get this, Owen?"

In answer, the scene shifted, and Owen began again.

"Here you beholds Lisbon, that wast city, or raythor what wos Lisbon after the great earthquake. See the ruins all around, and the women and children a screamin'; and the priests a prayin'—those men in robes is priests, papishers, like them Irish beggars."

"Hush, Owen," interrupted Mrs. Prothero. "Look, father, do look here."

While Mr. Prothero and Netta gazed admiringly, Mrs. Prothero was off and returned with Shanno, Mal, and Tom the boy, who were all in a broad grin of delight at the arrival of their prime favourite, Owen.

He, meanwhile, is in his element; begins

with Lord Nelson again, and makes the whole party take turns. Then he goes to Lisbon; afterwards he has The Queen of the Cannibal Islands; The Great Fire of London; a portrait large as life of the immense fat man Daniel Lambert, at sight of which the servants all exclaim "Lor!" and a variety of other splendid designs, which we decline enumerating. Suffice it to say that they all draw forth the approving commendations of the spectators, from Mr. Prothero, master, to Tom, serving-lad.

When the peep-show has been duly exhibited, Netta again demands her brother's history, and a particular account of how he procured the show.

"Oh! there is not much to tell," says Owen, "and I won't tell that unless father promises to keep his lecture till to-morrow. I hate a sermon late at night, but don't so much mind it in the morning. Don't look so serious, mother; I don't mean a clerical preachment. Do you promise, father?"

"Well, there, as you like," said Mr. Prothero,

laughing, "but I wish you had'nt made me break my shin."

"Here's a patch of diaculum, father. I hope you have not really hurt yourself."

"No, wild goose. Now, let's have the story."

"Well, here goes. Since this time twelvemonth I have been a voyage to Australia and back: seen Sydney and Botany Bay, and my brethren the convicts: done a little in the mercantile way: speculated in gin and 'baccy, on my own account, and helped the captain. Came home as first mate of the 'Fair Weather,' and had enough of sailoring in the worst voyage I ever made. We were almost wrecked more than once, and almost starved for the last month, owing to the time the leaky old hulk took in the voyage. When we landed in Plymouth, we had a spree, as you may suppose, and soon spent most of our money. I and a messmate were to travel together as far as Swansea, so we just saved money enough to pay our way, and enjoyed ourselves with the rest; but, as ill luck would have it, we fell in with a poor Welsh woman, who had come to Plymouth in the hope

of meeting her husband, and being disappointed and having spent all her money, she didn't know how to get back to her home again. Of course we couldn't leave a fellow countrywoman in distress, so we gave her what we had: enough to pay her journey home, and a few shillings over. We then sold some of our clothes, and stumbling upon a man with this old box in his arms, we bargained with him, and bought it for twelve shillings. He wanted a pound, but we beat him down.

"Having thus a fortune in our possession we set out with our peep-show, and thought of getting interest for our money. We have been about three weeks journeying from place to place; and I assure you we have seen a good deal of life. We unfortunately spent the interest of our fortune as it came in; but, as you will perceive, I have brought the whole capital home with me. When we entered a town on a fair or market-day, we made a great deal of money, but then the temptations to spend were all the greater. I used to have all the labour of the imagination, for my friend Jack Jenkins had not the gift of eloquence; so we agreed

that I should be showman, and he porter—a division of work that we thought quite fair. When we arrived at Swansea I gave him all the money we had in hand, and he resigned the peep-show to me, and so we parted company; he to go to his friends in Glamorganshire, I to come on here.

"I had a rare lark on my way home. I went to uncle's, and finding aunt in the garden, slouched my hat over my face, and began my story. She ordered me off the premises instantly as a vagrant. I went round to the back door and got a penny a piece from the servants, who were quite delighted. Then I met uncle, and telling him that I had a wonderful box of antiques to exhibit, he gave me sixpence, and with great curiosity poked his proboscis against the glass. It was worth something to see him. I at once put a picture of Stonehenge, and afterwards one of Herculaneum into the box, that I had bought on purpose for his benefit. I went through the history of the Druids, and managed a touch of Garn Goch and the Welsh castles with a strong and masterly nasal, that so delighted the worthy vicar, that he actually

invited me in to see his museum. I excused myself by saying that my wife was waiting for me—mother, that was my only fib, I assure you—and hastened away, lest in his delight at finding an itinerant archæologist, he should ask my wife to see his museum as well. The rest of my adventures you had the honour and glory of sharing, so I must beg to say they are at an end. And now I am really, and truly, and soberly, come to settle at home for the remainder of my days, and to become a farmer in good earnest if father will take me into partnership. The two things I like best in the world are, the rolling sea by moonlight and a field of golden corn in broad sunshine, of a fine day in autumn."

"Oh, you naughty boy!" cried Netta, as Owen ended his story.

"A fine sturdy farmer you would make," said Mr. Prothero, trying to stifle a very hearty fit of laughter, that burst out at last in spite of himself. "I'm glad you took in brother Jonathan, or he'd have had the laugh against me."

Mrs. Prothero had a tear in her eye as she

smiled sadly, and shook her head at the darling son who had caused her nothing but love and grief since he was born; but the tear was soon kissed away, and the smile turned into a cheerful one by that son's merry lips.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SEMPSTRESS.

Owen Prothero, like his sister Netta, had been very much spoilt by his father during his childhood and boyhood. Indeed, it would have been difficult not to have spoilt him. Handsome in person, and frank in manners, he was a general favourite. His uncle, the vicar, quite idolized him, and would have lavished a fortune on his education had he been of a studious nature. His mother, alone, conscious of his many faults, strove to correct them, and to counterbalance the undue admiration he received on all sides, by impartial justice in her praises and reproofs.

But we have not much to do with his boyhood, which was wild and untameable; beyond the fact, that when sent by his good uncle to

Rugby with a view to his becoming a clergyman, he resolutely declared his intention of going to sea, and ran away from school to effect his purpose. He was captured, however, by the masters, and a sharp look-out kept upon him for the future, which prevented further escapades.

He did not make brilliant progress in his studies, though he was clever enough, and accordingly his aunt persuaded her vicar to adopt her favourite nephew, Rowland, in his stead, and to let Owen go a voyage or two in a merchant vessel, to cure him of his love for a sea-faring life.

It was Mr. Prothero's wish to have one of his two sons a farmer, he did not much care which, so it was with some difficulty that aunt Jonathan induced him to listen to her proposal of making a clergyman of Rowland. He yielded at last, however, in the hope that when Owen had had enough of the sea, he would come and settle at home, since, next to this, his favourite hobby, he professed to like farming.

Owen was about fifteen when he first went to sea—he was just seven-and-twenty when he came home with the peep-show. During the

intermediate twelve years, he had been all over the world: not merely as a sailor, but as an adventurer, traveller, speculator, merchant, and wandering Jack-of-all trades. As quickly as he made money, so he lost it, spent it, or gave it away; and when he had no other resource, he worked as a common sailor, or labourer, until some lucky chance opened a passage for some fresh excitement. There is this to be said in his favour. During this whole period he was never chargeable to his father in any way. If he got into difficulties, he got out of them in his own way: if he was in want of bread, which had been frequently the case, his friends at home knew nothing of it. Beyond the regular new outfit, in the way of clothes, that his mother made for him each time that he returned home, he had never had anything from his parents, and resolutely refused it, if offered. Always cheerful, hopeful, in high spirits, open as the day, affectionate, and attractive, he was a welcome guest wherever he went. Did he come home in rags, or as now, with a peep-show in his arms, or as once before, with a hurdy-gurdy and monkey, all his old friends made merry, and gave parties

in his honour. And whatever the state of his wardrobe or exchequer, he was sure to be in the fields the following day, reaping, hay-making, ploughing, sowing, or even milking, as either of these, or similar avocations, came in his way. Nobody could be angry with him, and his father's lectures, and his brother's reasonings, all melted away before the row of white teeth that he was for ever displaying in his joyous laughter.

Of middle height, athletic, sunburnt—with hands almost as brown as his merry brown eyes—with black, long, curly hair, a bushy beard, and plenty of whiskers, a bronze neck from which, in sailor fashion, the blue and white shirt-collar receded—and a broad forehead, showing all kinds of bumps, particularly those of locality over the bushy black eyebrows—Owen Prothero was as fine a type of an English sailor as could be found the broad seas over.

Owen was in the habit of falling desperately in love with at least one out of every five or six girls that came in his way, and of making frightful havoc in the hearts of females of all ranks and ages. Netta's general enquiry was,—

"Well, Owen, who is the last new love?"—to which Owen would gravely reply, by a recapitulation of the charms of some fair damsel on whom his affections would be for ever fixed, could he only afford to marry. All his beauties had bright eyes, bright complexions, mirthful smiles, and were very "jolly," which seemed to be the word including all that was necessary to make a woman charming in his eyes.

"So Netta, Howel has come into a fine fortune!" he began one morning, when he and his sister were alone together. "I suppose he wont think of little cousin Netta now!"

"Oh! indeed," was Netta's reply with a toss of the head.

"I wish he was here now. He is a fine fellow in his way. I do like Howel."

"I knew you would say so," exclaimed Netta. "You are a kind, dear brother. They are all turned against him, even mother, who can take in the scum of the earth, and make much of a wretched Irish beggar, and will not ask Howel here, who is a gentleman."

"Oh! oh! that's the way the wind blows.

So you do not forget cousin Howel, Miss Netta."

"No, I assure you; and I won't forget him, that's more."

"Bravo! Netta. I admire a girl of spirit. But, perhaps now he is so grand he will not think of you."

"I suppose that depends upon whether I choose to think of him. They say he is coming down soon, and that he will be the grandest man in the county."

What Netta had heard rumoured came to pass in due time. Mr. Howel Jenkins did come from London, and established himself in the best hotel of his native town, throwing out hints as to the probability of his taking a certain beautiful park in the neighbourhood. He was soon supplied with the best horses, dogs, and general appointments of any man in the county; and being really clever, handsome, and sufficiently gentleman-like, had made his way into society that had hitherto been closed to him. Like Prince Hal, he eschewed most of his former companions, and appeared to be beginning life anew, in a new world. The

country rang with rumours of his enormous wealth, which, considerable as it was, they nearly doubled. Indeed he himself scarcely knew what he was worth, as he was continually finding memorandums of monies out at high interest, of which his father had not chosen to speak to Rowland, and which his carefully secreted books and papers proved, as well as the knowledge of Mr. Rice Rice, who had been his attorney.

In the course of the autumn the Irish girl was quite convalescent, and, although not strong, had recovered from the fever, and was regaining some degree of health. As she was such a clever sempstress, even Netta did not object to a proposal made by Mrs. Prothero, that she should remain as a work-girl, at least until Owen's wardrobe was in a decent condition; and she was accordingly installed in a small room, half lumber-room, half work-room, as shirt-maker in ordinary to the son and heir. He was restored to his own bed-room, and, together, with his father kept at a distance from the bone of contention.

However, adverse elements cannot always be

kept apart, and one day when Mrs. Prothero was sitting stitching wristbands with Gladys, her better half made his appearance suddenly in the room.

"Mother, I have been hunting you out all over the house," he exclaimed, "I have torn the sleeve of my coat from top to bottom in that confounded hedge."

As he took off his coat and displayed the tear, he perceived Gladys, who had risen from her work, and curtseyed very timidly and profoundly. Mr. Prothero had almost forgotten the Irish beggar, and certainly did not suppose the tidy-looking, pale, tall girl before him to be her.

"Oh, young 'ooman, I dare say you can do this job for me. You've got a new manty maker, mother; where's Jane Morris, name o' goodness?"

"We're only making shirits for Owen, father," replied the wife meekly, dreading an outburst.

Gladys took up the coat and was instantly engaged in mending it, whilst Mr. Prothero produced a letter just received from Rowland.

"There, my dear, now you ought to be satisfied, and I am sure Mrs. Jonathan will be as proud as Punch. Rowland has been ordained by the Bishop of London himself, and 'passed a very good examination,' or whatever they call it. He has taken lodgings up in London, and preached his first sermon in a great church that 'ould hold three of ours. He has dined with the rector, and been to call on Sir Philip Payne Perry,—the three green peas as Owen calls him—and I wonder what even Mrs. Jonathan 'ould desire more?"

Mrs. Prothero read her dear son's letter with tears in her eyes, the sudden sight of which caused sympathetic tears to flow from the eyes of the poor work-girl, much to the surprise of Mr. Prothero, who chanced to look round to see whether his coat was finished.

"Hang the 'oomen," he muttered to himself "they can't read a bit of a letter without blubbing. How long will that take you to do? —what's your name?"

"Gladys, if you please, Sir," said Gladys, looking up from her work. "I shall have finished it directly, Sir."

"Gladys? Gladys what?" asked Mr. Prothero.

"Gladys O'Grady, Sir," was the reply whilst the mending was coming to a close.

"Where on earth did you pick up such names as that?"

"One was my mother's, and the other my father's, Sir," said Gladys, rising and presenting the coat with a deep curtsey.

Mrs. Prothero was absorbed in her letter.

"Name o' goodness where did your father pick up such a name? and where do you live?"

The girl bent down her head over the coat she held in her hand, and her tears fell upon it.

"There, never mind; give me my coat. Thank you. Why Lewis the tailor 'ouldn't 'a mended it better. Why, girl, where did you learn tailoring?"

"Mother taught me to mend everything, Sir."

"There then, take you that old hat and see if you can make as good a job of sewing on the brim as you done of the coat. Mother, come you here, I want to speak to you."

Mr. Prothero left the room, and Mrs. Prothero followed.

"Who's that girl, mother? I never saw her before," were his first words in the passage, whilst pulling on the coat that he had begun to put on in the work-room.

"Why, David, you see—it is—there now, don't be angry."

"Angry! what for? Hasn't she mended my coat capital, and isn't she as modest looking a young 'ooman as I ever saw?"

"She is very delicate, but she works night and day. Indeed she does more in a day than most girls in a week. Owen wanted some shirts you see—she made that cap you admired so much, and that new gown of Netta's; and has more than paid for—"

"But who the deuce is she?"

"There now, don't be angry, David. 'Tis that poor Irish girl that was so ill of the fever."

"I'll never believe she's Irish as long as I live—she's too pretty, and tidy, and delicate, and fair. She's no more Irish than I am, mother, and you've been taken in."

"She is Welsh on the mother's side. But are you very angry, David?"

"No, I don't mind her doing a little work in an honest way like that. I'm not such a fool. When she has done the work send her off, that's all. Poor soul! she does look as if she had been dead and buried and come to life again. Mother, you're a good 'ooman, and God bless you!"

Mrs. Prothero looked up into her husband's face with an expression of such love and joy as must have rejoiced a much harder heart than that spouse possessed. Don't laugh, gentle reader, at the conjugal embrace of that middle-aged pair, which seals the quarrel about the Irish girl; but believe me, there is more real sentiment in it than in most of the love-scenes you may have read about.

Mrs. Prothero took advantage of her husband's approval of Gladys's exterior to send her out into the garden in the evening to breathe the air, and afterwards into the fields. The girl's strength gradually returned, but with it there appeared to be no return of youth or hope. A settled melancholy was in her coun-

tenance and demeanour; and when Netta rallied her on being so sad and silent, her reply was, "Oh, miss, there is no more joy or happiness for me in this world! all I love have left it, and I am but a lonely wanderer and an outcast!"

When the shirts were finished, it was time to think of her departure, for she had exhausted all the sewing-work of the house. Mrs. Prothero could not bear to turn the friendless, homeless girl, adrift on the world. She ventured upon the subject one day at dinner.

"What will become of her, David? And she so beautiful! I declare I think I never saw a prettier girl."

"Well, mother, who will you call pretty next?" said Owen, who had seen her once or twice by chance. "Why, she has no more colour in her face than this tablecloth, and I don't believe she has any eyes at all; at least, I never saw them; but I mean to try whether she has any some day, by making a frightful noise when she makes me that smart curtsey in passing."

"I am sure we want hands badly enough in

the wheat field," said Farmer Prothero. "If the girl could pick up her crumbs a little by harvesting, you could keep her a while longer, and then send her off in search of her relations."

"Thank you, David. I will ask her what she can do," said Mrs. Prothero.

"Not much in that way, I am pretty sure," said Netta. "How should those wretched Irish who live on nothing but potatoes, know any thing about the wheat harvest?"

"Treue for you there, my girl," said Mr. Prothero, "but I dare say mother will make believe that she knows something."

"Mother" found the object of their conversation that very evening in the wheat field, sitting under a tree, at work. She had sent her out for a walk, and this was her exercise. Owen and Netta were with their mother, and as they approached, Gladys rose, curtseyed, and was going away, when Owen made an unnatural kind of whistle, as if to frighten away some cows in the distance. Gladys started, and with a terrified face looked at him. He found that she had very beautiful, violet eyes,

with lashes so long and black, that when she looked to the earth again they made a strange contrast to her pale face.

"What sad, uncomfortable eyes," thought Owen; "I must have another glance at them by and bye. If she had a colour she might be pretty, as mother says, but it makes one ill to look at her."

"Do you think," said Mrs. Prothero, addressing Gladys, "that you could manage to help in the harvest? My husband says he will employ you, if you can."

"Oh, thank you, my lady! I would do my best, and if I could only stay here longer under any circumstances—I should—oh, be so thankful!"

This was said with much hesitation.

"Very well, then; if you will try to-morrow we shall be able to judge what you can do."

"She don't look strong enough to bind the sheaves," said Owen.

"I will try, Sir, if you please," said Gladys.

"What is the name of the friends you are looking for?" asked Owen, with a glance at his sister.

"Jones, Sir," replied Gladys, again looking at Owen.

"Perhaps there is a David in the family?" asked Owen.

"I believe that my grandfather's name was David," was the reply.

"Now, if you walk through Carmarthenshire, and just ask every one you meet if they know David Jones, I am sure you would find him. It is astonishing what a powerful name David Jones is. I know a Rev. David Jones very well; a clergyman, too—"

"Oh! if you could only tell me where to find him. I would go any where for my poor mother's sake!"

The girl clasped her hands and looked imploringly at Owen. He was silenced by the appeal of the eyes he did not believe in. Mrs. Prothero glanced at him reproachfully, and said:—

"It is such a common Welsh name that I am afraid it would be no guide to you, unless you would remember the place where he lived."

"I dare say it began with Llan," broke in Owen.

"I am almost sure it did," said Gladys; "but mother never liked to talk of the place."

"What do you say, mother, to writing to 'the Rev. David Jones, Llan., &c., Carmarthenshire?'"

Netta laughed aloud; she could not help it; whilst Gladys again looked upon the ground.

"Owen," whispered Mrs. Prothero, taking her son's arm and leading him away, "what is a joke to you is death to her, remember that."

"There, don't be angry, mother; I will help her to do her work to-morrow."

He was as good as his word, and the following day resolutely kept near the poor, timid girl, helping her to bind up the full-eared corn, and carrying it himself for her to the mows, into which they were hastily forming the sheaves for fear of rain. He could not resist occasionally alluding to Mr. David Jones, but receiving no encouragement to carry out the jest, and finding her as silent and shy as a frightened child, he gave up the subject, and with it all attempt at conversation. He declared afterwards that she worked like a slave, and knew all about harvesting as well as any body, only

she was not strong. That she was the dullest Irish woman he ever saw in his life, since even the beggars had a bit of fun in them. Indeed, he didn't believe her to be Irish, or credit a word of her story; but, as to beauty, he began to agree with his mother, for if she had only a colour she would be as pretty a girl, with as graceful a figure, as anybody need wish to see.

The farmer declared that she had well earned her supper; and that if mother thought she would do, she might keep her instead of Betty, after Hollantide; the said Betty having signified her intention of getting married at that matrimonial season of the year. Mrs. Prothero said she would think it over, but she was afraid she was not strong enough for hard farm service. It was evident that Gladys had taken a step into the kind heart of the worthy farmer.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WIDOW.

"WHOSE grand groom is that, half afraid to ride through the yard?" asked Mr. Prothero, as he and his son Owen were standing by the big wheat-mow, awaiting the arrival of a load of corn.

"I'll go and see what he wants," said Owen and off he went.

He returned, bearing a note for his father.

"He says he is Mr. Griffith Jenkins's groom, and waits for an answer. Howel does'nt do the thing by halves any how."

"Mr. Griffith Jackanapes!" said the farmer, breaking the seal of the note hastily, and reading it.

Owen watched his countenance assume an angry expression, and then heard him utter a very broad Welsh oath.

"Tell that feller there's no answer," said Mr. Prothero.

"What is it about father? you had better let mother see it first."

"The impudent young ass! does he think I am to be taken in by all that gold and plush? He shall never have my consent, and you may tell him so, Owen."

"Come into the house a minute, father, and let us see the note."

They went into the house, the farmer giving an indignant grunt at the groom as he passed.

"Mother, come here!" he roared, as he entered the parlour, followed by Owen.

The obedient wife left her kitchen and went to her husband.

"Read you it out loud, Owen."

Owen read.

"Sir,

"Being in a position to marry, and to marry any lady in the county, I think you

need not be surprised at my now aspiring to the hand of your daughter, to whom I have been many years attached. I beg, therefore, to say, that my object in writing to you, is to ask your permission to pay my addresses to her, and to make her my wife. My attorney will make any arrangements you may require as regards settlements, which are matters of no importance to me.

"I remain, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"Howel Griffith Jenkins."

"The impudent scoundrel!" said Mr. Prothero.

"Well, father, I don't see—" began Owen.

"You don't see, Sir, I dare say you don't. Was'nt he as near ruining you as possible! Did'nt he teach you to gamble, and fleece you, and lead you into all kinds of mischief? Did'nt I forbid him the house for it? Did'nt he rob his own father, and make his mother miserable? Did'nt he drink and keep company with the worst profligates of the country? Did'nt he as good as rob me, Sir, out of a ten pound note

when he was a bit of a boy, and when I found it out, called it a lark? Do you think a great fortune will all of a sudden change such a chap as that into an honest man? No, what's ill got is ill spent, and old Griffey Jenkins's money 'ill never turn to good account. He that grinds the poor, and goes against scripture as a usurer, 'ill never find his son do well. Howel shall never have my consent to marry Netta, and there's an end of it."

"But suppose they are determined," said Mrs. Prothero.

"Then I'll wash my hands of 'em for ever, and vow Netta's no girl of mine. Go you, Owen, and send off that fine yellar-band, sent to astonish me, and tell him I'll have nothing to do with his master nor him."

"But, father, you must write!"

"Write, not I: but stop, I'll write. Bring the paper. Havn't you got any with a fine gloss, and coloured?"

"Now, David bach, if you would only consider a little. I am really afraid of the consequences."

"Now, mother, my mind's made up, and

you won't wheedle me in this matter. So; here's the pen and ink."

Mr. Prothero sat down and wrote the following reply to Howel's note.

"Howel,

"You have had my answer before now, and you may have it again. When I know you're out-and-out a changed man, I may think differently; but I don't know it yet, so you shall not have my consent to marrying Netta. One hundred pound of steadiness and honesty, is worth a hundred thousand pound of gold. I I wish you well, but if you was king of England you shouldn't have my girl as you are now.

"Yours to command,

"DAVID PROTHERO."

"There, mother, there's my mind," said Mr. Prothero, giving the note to his wife.

"Well, David, I believe you are right, only Netta is so determined!"

"Determined is she! Then I'll lock her up. Take you that to yellar-band, Owen."

Owen took the note to the servant.

"Tell your master that I am coming to see him this evening," he said, and soliloquized thus when the man was gone. "Howel is a good fellow, I believe, only a little extravagant and gay. I must tell him not to be down-hearted about Netta. Why, the girl isn't worth such a bother; I never saw one that was yet. It would take a great deal of time and trouble to work me up into that kind of thing—and at least a dozen girls. Netta's very pretty to be sure, but she has a will of her own, and so has Howel. I am sure they would soon fight. As to father, he is as obstinate as a mule. And Howel with such a mint of money! But I like father's pride, and I must say I feel proud of him for it. I would never give in just because a man has suddenly got a fortune."

When Owen had arrived at this conclusion, he perceived Netta coming towards him.

"What did that servant want, Owen?" she asked when she came quite near, "and what were those two notes about?"

"I dare say you know, Miss Netta. It is all over with you for this present. Howel has

popped the question, and father has refused him."

If Owen had ever been really in love, he would have spoken less abruptly on such a delicate subject, as he found, when he saw Netta urn pale, then red, then burst into tears and run away from him into the house.

He followed her, somewhat distressed, to the door of her bed-room. He knocked gently, but received no answer.

"Netta, let me in, I have something to say to you."

No reply, but a passionate sobbing audible.

"Netta, dear Netta, I am so sorry for you. Let me in."

He tried the door, but it was locked.

"Netta, if you don't let me in, I'll go and fetch mother directly. One, two, three, and now, open the door, I'm going. One, two, three, and, away!"

He walked down the passage, and heard the door opened behind him.

"Owen, come here, I will let you in."

"There's a good little sister."

"Don't palaver me, Sir," burst forth Netta,

as soon as her door was closed. "You are all unfeeling, unnatural, cruel, selfish, hard-hearted heathens! You don't care for me or Howel any more than as if we were strangers. Father don't mind what he drives me to, and mother cares more for that Irish beggar than for me—I know she does. I did think you would be our friend, and now you are as stiff and unfeeling as Rowland. Seure you are."

"Why, if I was a parson, like Rowland, I'd marry you to-morrow."

"Then, why don't you try to bring father round. You know he thinks more of you than of anybody else."

"It's no use trying; nobody but mother has any influence with father, and she is not sure that 'tis right or good for you and Howel to marry."

"She is cruel and unkind," sobbed Netta, "I don't believe any one really loves me but Howel."

"Stick to that, Netta; I, for one haven't a spark of affection for you. All father wants is to get rid of you, and that is why he is in such a hurry for you to make such a grand match!"

"Oh! indeed! he and all the rest of you are as jealous of Howel's good fortune as you can be, you know you are. And you wouldn't like to see me a grand lady, grander than Miss Rice Rice, or Miss Nugent even. Won't I let them know I'm somebody, and not to be looked down upon any more, that's all!"

Hereupon Netta wiped her eyes, and walked up and down the room grandly, whilst Owen burst out laughing.

"I beg you to go out of my room, Owen!" said Netta, stamping her foot and getting into a passion. "One can't expect manners or sympathy from sea-faring porcupines like you. Go away directly. Why John James, the carter, is genteeler than a great coarse sailor like you. Go you away, I say."

"You ought to have said a sea-faring dolphin, or whale; they don't pay twopence a week to learn manners, like you landjubbers. When you want me you may send for me."

Owen went off very much offended, leaving Netta to cogitate upon the cruelty of her relations.

In the course of that afternoon, a very well dressed woman in the deepest of sables, was seen going down the road to the farm. She went round through the garden to the glass door, disdaining the yard, knocked a great many times, to the great astonishment of Shanno, and was at last admitted, as Mrs. Griffith Jenkins. Shanno all reverence at sight of the crape bonnet, crape veil, and widow's cap, ushered her into the parlour, feeling that a great chasm now lay between her and the dame she had last seen in a high-crowned Welsh hat, striped flannel-gown, and checked apron. Having duly dusted a chair with her apron, Shanno glanced at Mrs. Jenkins, and was about to leave the room, when Mrs. Jenkins said,

"Tell you your missus that I am coming on particular business, and wish to speak with her in private. Here, stop you, Shanno, where is Miss Netta? I 'ouldn't mind giving you a shilling to tell her I was wanting to see her before I am seeing her mother."

The shilling was offered and received with much satisfaction and an intelligent grin, and

in less than five minutes, Netta was with Mrs. Jenkins.

"Deet to goodness, and you do look very poorly, Netta fach!" said that worthy, "Howel was telling me to see you, and to be giving you this note. Give you another to Shanno before I will be going away, and I will give it to my Howel. Annwyl! you shall be seeing my Howel, now; how he do look a horseback. Beauty iawn! he do say you will have a horse, too. There, go you; tell Shanno to tell your mother that I do be glad to see her, let her tak care how she do refuse you again."

Netta escaped with her note, and was soon succeeded by Mrs. Prothero, who shook hands in a trembling, frightened way with Mrs. Jenkins, who, on the contrary, strong in the consciousness of fortune and new apparel, was perfectly self-possessed. She began at once.

"I am coming about my Howel and your Netta, Mrs. Prothero. Howel is in a fine temper, keeping noise enough, I can tell you; and I should like to be knowing why he isn't good enough for your doater, Mrs. Prothero; him as is worth hundreds of thousands, and is as

like to be coming a member, and to be riding in his own carriage, and to be dining with the Queen for that much! and seurely, he don't be good enough for Miss Prothero Glanaravon Farm! Ach a fi! some peoples do be setting themselves up! my Howel, too! So handsome, and genteel, and so full of learning! Name o'goodness what would you have Mrs. Prothero Glanaravon Farm?"

Mrs. Jenkins paused with a long emphasis on the Farm.

"I am very sorry, Mrs. Jenkins," began trembling Mrs. Prothero, rubbing one hand nervously over the other, "but my husband is afraid that Howel is not quite steady enough for such a giddy young thing as Netta."

"Study! why tak your time, and you'll be seeing how study and pretty he do behave. On my deet, and I 'ouldn't say that if I wasn't as seure as I'm alive, he have'nt took a drop too much, nor said a wicked word, nor keep no low company since his poor dear father was dying. Ah, Mrs. Prothero! you was being very good to us when I was losing my poor

Griffey. Who'd be thinking what a heap of money, he'd be leaving, and Howel 'll be building a good house for me; and seure, I must be dressing in my best, and having servants to wait on me; and, bless you, nothing as my son Howels can be getting is too good for his poor old mother!"

"I am very glad to hear he is so kind," said Mrs. Prothero.

"Then what do you say about Netta, Mrs. Prothero fach?" sharply asked Mrs. Jenkins.

"To tell you the truth, I have very little power; my husband made up his mind and wrote the note without consulting me."

"Then may be I could be seeing Mr. Prothero?"

"I am afraid it would only lead to something unpleasant between you."

"Oh! you needn't be taking the trouble to be afraid, Ma'am! I am calling my Howel as good or better as your Netta. There was a time when you might been looking higher, but now I conceit it, it will be us as do condescend. There's Miss Rice Rice, and the Miss Jamms's, Plas Newydd, and Miss Lawis, Pontammon, and

Miss Colonel Rees, and Miss Jones the 'Torney, and Miss Captain Thomas, and I 'ouldn't say but Miss Gwynne, Glanaravon, do be all speaking, and talking, and walking, and dancing with my Howels! There's for you! and yet he do like his cousin Netta best, he do say."

"If you wish to see David, Mrs. Griffey, I will call him," said timid Mrs Prothero, at her wit's end, for anything to say or do.

"Seurely I am wishing to see him," said Mrs. Jenkins majestically.

David had not come in from his farm, so there was nothing for it, but to ask Mrs. Jenkins to take off her bonnet and have some tea, to which that lady graciously consented. When the crape shawl and black kid gloves were removed, Mrs. Prothero perceived a large mourning brooch, containing a gloomy picture of a tomb, set in pearls and diamonds, and surrounded by the age, death, &c., of the lamented deceased; and a handsome mourning ring, displaying a portion of iron-grey hair, also set in pearls and diamonds, and surrounded with an appropriate epithalamium. Mrs. Prothero sat "washing her hands in invisible soap," whilst

she saw these ensigns of grandeur in the once mean, ill-dressed Mrs. Jenkins, and heard of all that, "her Howels" was about to effect.

Owen came in and with due gravity admired the mourning insignia, and examined the dates, age, &c., of the defunct Griffey. He went so far as to venture upon a distant allusion to the future.

"I never thought those caps so becoming before, Aunt Jenkins," he said, eyeing her from head to foot, and wondering that he had never previously been aware of what a good-looking woman his Welsh aunt was.

A Welsh aunt be it understood is your father or mother's cousin, and Mrs. Jenkins and Mr. Prothero were first cousins.

"Is'nt Davies, Pennycoed, that you used to tell us was once a lover of yours, a widower? I shouldn't wonder."

"Well, Owen," said Mrs. Jenkins, not displeased, "you are always for joks, but I do never mean to marry again."

"Don't make any rash vows, a young woman like you!"

Here Netta having dried her eyes, joined

the party, and shortly after Mr. Prothero's voice was heard.

"After tea!" whispered Mrs. Prothero to Mrs. Jenkins, as she went out to meet her husband, "Here's Elizabeth Jenkins, David, come over to see us, and she is going to stay to tea. I think she wants to speak to you afterwards."

"Very glad to see her, but Howel shan't have Netta, a bit the more for that."

Mr. Prothero put on a smart coat, brushed his hair, and came into the parlour, as became one about to meet a grand lady.

"How d'ye do, cousin 'Lizabeth. Glad to see you looking so well, welcome to Glanaravon."

They shook hands, and as Mrs. Jenkins made rather a grand attempt at a curtsey, Owen looked at Netta, and showed his white teeth, but Netta was as grave as a judge.

Mr. Prothero was as much struck with the improvement in the widow's appearance, as his son.

"Why, I declare cousin 'Lizabeth, you look ten years younger than you did when I saw you

last. Do you mind when we two used to go nutting together? If 'twasn't for my good 'ooman there. . . . "

"I was just saying so, father," interrupted Owen, "don't you think Davies, Penycoed. . . . ?"

"I am not having no intentions of marrying again," simpered the widow, "wanst is enough, my poor Griffey."

"Quite right, cousin 'Lizabeth, wan Griffey is enough, in all conscience."

The best tea-things were duly arranged; cakes hot from the oven, buttered; the best green tea put into the best tea pot, and all proper honour done to Mrs. Jenkins, from which she augured well for her Howels.

As Shanno was very busy and very dirty, Mrs. Prothero, during her preparations in the kitchen, was at a loss to know who was to wait, if anything was wanted. Gladys chanced to be there, and said modestly,

"If I could do, ma'am, I would soon make myself neat in Miss Prothero's gown; and if I might just take in the tray instead of you."

"Thank you, Gladys, I am sure you will do," and Gladys was installed.

"There is nothing that girl cannnot do," thought Mrs. Prothero, as she arranged everything on the tea-table as neatly and properly as Mrs. Prothero could have done herself.

"What a tidy girl you have?" said Mrs. Jenkins. "Do she mean to be staying over Hollantide? I am wanting a servant."

All eyes were turned on Gladys as she came into the room again, but as hers were always fixed on what she was carrying, or on her mistress, she was not aware of the sudden attention she excited.

"Irish beggars," muttered Netta.

"One of mother's godsends," said Mr. Prothero.

"What a beautiful piece of snow," thought Owen.

After tea, Mr. Prothero invited Mrs. Jenkins to go and see his fine fat cattle. The pair went together, leaving an anxious trio behind them.

Farmer Prothero was a man of few words, when his mind was made up, and was not long in beginning the subject each had at heart.

"I'm sorry cousin 'Lizabeth, that I can't

let Netta marry just now. She's too young, and Howel isn't the lad to study her."

"Oh! but you can't be knowing, David Prothero, how study he is since his poor father's death."

"Then let him wait two years, and if he is downright well-conducted then, he may have Netta."

"Upon my deet! He as can be marrying Miss Rice Rice, or any young lady in the country! mighty condescent, Mr. Prothero!"

"Let him marry 'em all, I don't wan't him."

"Then you won't let Netta marry my Howels?"

"If he's study in two years, and they are both in the same mind, they may marry, and he hanged to 'em. I never was so bothered in my life. But between ourselves, I think it's just as likely your son Howel 'ould be study in two years, as my son Owen."

"Oh, name o'goodness, we don't want Miss Netta! no 'casion to be waiting!"

"Then don't wait 'ooman! who wants you to wait?"

Mrs. Jenkins hurried back into the house, and left Mr. Prothero with his cattle.

"I must be going now, Mrs. Prothero—my son Howels too! Thousands and thousands of pounds. Netta, come you up-stairs, my dear, whilst I am putting on my bonnet."

Mrs. Prothero was not duenna enough to accompany them up-stairs, and consequently Netta gave a note to Mrs. Jenkins, cried a little, and helped her to abuse her parents.

"Never you mind, Netta fach," were the last words, "Howels don't be meaning to give you up."

"Good evening Ma'am, good evening Mr. Owen," said Mrs. Jenkins, as she made the attempt at a curtsey, that caused Owen to show his white teeth.

"Oh dear, dear! what will be the end of it?" said Mrs. Prothero to Owen, as Netta sulked up-stairs. "I wish Rowland was at home."

"Very complimentary to your eldest son!" said Owen laughing.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MILLIONNAIRE.

Nearly a twelvemonth passed, and an autumn morning again hovered over Glanaravon Farm. It would seem that all the inmates of the homestead were sleeping, but there was one already awake and moving furtively about. It was Netta, not usually such an early riser. The curtains of her trim little bed and window were drawn aside, to admit all the light that a September twilight could cast upon the chamber in which she had slept since her childhood. A lovely bunch of monthly roses, and some leaves of dark green ivy, alone looked in upon her in the uncertain gloaming, as if imaging her present and future. She was dressing herself

hastily, but with care, in her very best attire. She stood before the glass, braiding and arranging her dark glossy hair, that luxuriant ornament of her bright, rosy face; then she put on the blossom white lace habit-shirt, and striped pink and drab silk dress—her kind father's last gift, and the smart shawl and pink bonnet were duly arranged afterwards. Whatever the early visit Netta was about to make, it was evidently a premeditated one. When the attire was quite complete, and she had surveyed herself in the glass, she suddenly paused and looked around her. In a moment she was putting her room to rights, and pushing stray articles of dress into drawers, until all was quite neat; then she paused again, and glanced at a letter that was lying on her little dressing-table. Turning hastily away from this, she opened the window and looked out. The sun had not yet arisen, though there was a streak of light, forerunner of his advent, on the horizon. Mountains, rivers, fields, and woods, were all wrapped in a cold, grey mist, but still it was not dark. Netta tore the bunch of roses from the bough and put them in her bosom, then

re-closed the window. She took up a large shawl that was lying on a chair, and a small package from underneath, and dexterously arranged the shawl so as to fall over the parcel, as she held both in her hand and on her arm. Again she paused a moment and glanced around her. Her face was flushed, and there was moisture in her dark eye.

Oh, pause a little longer and consider, poor Netta! But no. The sudden flash of sunlight into the room terrifies the thoughtless child, and she goes hastily into the passage. Quietly she closes her door; stealthily she creeps along. She makes no sound as she steals, like a thief, through the house where she was born some eighteen summers ago. Before one closed door she pauses again—listens. She can hear the breath of the sleepers within. She is on her knees, and represses with difficulty a rising sob. "Mother! mother! forgive me! God bless you!" she whispers, as she once more rises, and runs down the remainder of the passage—down stairs—through the hall—through the parlour, and out by the little glass door into the garden. In spite of her tears, haste, agita-

tion, she cannot pass that bed of carnations—her mother's treasures—without stooping to gather one fresh and dripping with the air and dews of night. Innocent flowers! They will see her mother that very day; but what of the stray, wandering rose of Glanaravon? Through the garden, and out by the little wicket into the lane; across a field sparkling with dew drops; over a stile; down another lane; over another stile, and into another field! Here she pauses and glances round. A dark figure at the opposite side of the field seems to assure her that all is well. She runs quickly across the meadow, and within it, under shelter of the hedge, near a half-open gate, stands Mrs. Griffith Jenkins.

"Where is Howel?" asks Netta, hastily.

"He did write yesterday to say he 'ould bring the carriage from Swansea to meet us at Tenewydd, and he was sure to be there by six o'clock."

"Let us make haste then, Aunt 'Lisbeth. Why didn't he come here himself? I have a great mind to turn back."

"Come you, Netta fach! we'll soon be there. See you the letter?"

"Not now—not now," cries Netta, impatiently, walking along the high-road as fast as she possibly can. Mrs. Jenkins keeps up with her, but is soon out of breath.

"There's Jack Trefortyn,—he'll be sure to tell. Aunt 'Lisbeth, I will turn back. Father will be after me. It is too bad," sobs Netta.

"We are near by now, Netta fach. Come you!"

The little woman quickened her pace into a short run to keep up with Netta.

"Here's the turnpike; we'll be at Tenewydd 'rectly."

"I see Tenewydd," says Netta, straining her eyes to catch sight of some object far down the road; "there is no carriage—I am sure there is none. Cousin Howel ought to be ashamed of himself." Netta runs on very fast, leaving Mrs. Jenkins far behind, until she reaches the turning to a lane that leads to a little farm called "Tenewydd." She bursts out crying, and stamps her foot as she exclaims—

"Does he think he's going to do what he likes with me because he's rich? I'll tell him he shall wait for me, I will!"

Hereupon she turns back and runs faster than before towards Mrs. Jenkins.

"Come you, Netta fach! He'll be here by now. Read you the letter."

Netta pauses a moment to read a letter held out to her by Mrs. Jenkins. It runs thus:—

"I can't be with you to-day. Meet Netta at the appointed place, and walk to Tenewydd. I will be there with a carriage by six o'clock. Yours, H. J."

"See you, Netta, it isn't six yet." Mrs. Jenkins pulls out a large gold watch, which, while Netta was running on, she has managed to put back half-an-hour. "Five-and-twenty minutes to six, see you."

Netta turns again and hurries on.

"There is Jones Tenewydd. If he should see me," says Netta. "Do make haste, Aunt 'Lisbeth."

They walk on for about a quarter of a mile, when carriage wheels are distinctly heard, and in a few moments a fly and pair is distinctly seen coming at great speed. The driver would have passed them, but Mrs. Jenkins calls out—

"A gentleman for Tenewydd inside?" Upon which he pulls up. Howel is out of the fly, and Netta lifted in before she knows what she is about. Mrs. Jenkins is put in almost as quickly, and the fly turned and off again in less time than it takes to write it.

"Howel, how could you? I was going back, and I wish I had," sobs Netta.

Howel kisses her and tells her to be a good little cousin, and she shall see London in no time. She clings close to him, and hides her face on his shoulder and sobs on. He draws her to him, and lets her grief have way. Few words are spoken for a time, but at last Netta dries her tears and says, "I was so frightened, cousin, and I didn't think it would be so hard to leave mother without saying good-bye. Mother was always kind."

"Hide you, Howel! hide you, Netta! there's Mr. Jonathan Prothero," says Mrs. Jenkins shrinking back into the corner of the fly.

Howel peeps out and sees Netta's worthy uncle, bag on back, setting forth on some archæological search.

Howel and Netta lean back in the fly whilst

he passes, little thinking who the vehicle contains.

"Uncle and aunt will be glad at least," says Netta. "Aunt says you are very clever and handsome, Howel, and wonders why father won't let us— '

"Marry, Netta—say the word. I suppose Aunt Jonathan found out my talents and beauty after I acquired my fortune."

After driving about ten miles they stop to change horses, and in the course of three or four hours arrive at the Swansea railway station, newly erected within the last few months. The scene is equally new to Netta and Mrs. Jenkins, and whilst Howel goes to take their tickets, they stand wondering and admiring. Neither of them has ever travelled by rail, and both are equally nervous at the prospect. They are just in time for the express, and soon find themselves seated in a first class carriage. As it is a carriage of two compartments, Howel fastens the door between the two, draws down the blind, puts some coats on the fourth seat, and says they will now have it to themselves all the way to London.

Netta seizes his hand and screams when the steam whistle sounds, and his mother falls down upon him from the opposite seat. He laughs aloud, and seems in such buoyant spirits that the women laugh too ; and very soon Netta has quite forgotten her home, as with her hand clasped in Howel's, he unfolds to her his future plans, and arranges hers.

"Deet, and this is like a sofa in a drawing-room. I shall be asleep if I don't take care," says Mrs. Jenkins.

"The best thing you can do, mother. I will awake you when we get to Reading where the biscuits are made you used to sell, faugh ! and be sure to show you Windsor Castle."

Mrs. Jenkins obeys her son's wish, and is soon sleeping soundly.

Howel then gives Netta the following intelligence, which, as it interests her we will hope may be interesting to her friends.

"The old gown you gave my mother, Netta, I sent to a celebrated house in town, and calling there the next day ordered a proper *trousseau* to be made for you."

"What's a *trousseau*, Howel ?"

"You little dunce. Why what we call a *stafell*, without the household furniture. So you will find a wedding dress and all kinds of dresses and garments without number awaiting you, for I gave the milliner *carte blanche*."

"What's *carte blanche*, cousin? you are become so grand."

"Never mind,—white paper with two meanings. And here is a present to begin with."

Howel takes a leather case from his pocket, and puts it into Netta's hand. She opens it, and sees a beautiful little gold watch and chain.

"Oh! you dear, kind cousin Howel!" she cries, her eyes sparkling with delight. "I have longed for one all my life."

"Will you go back again, Netta dear?" asks Howel archly.

The watch and chain are duly put on, and then Howel continues.

"To-morrow you will have a hard day's work. You must purchase a great many things that will be necessary for travelling that I could not buy; the rest we can get in Paris. I have invited my friends, Sir John and Lady Simpson,

and their son and daughter to the wedding, which I have fixed for the day after to-morrow. One of the reasons for my not being able to come to you yesterday was, that I must be a fortnight in the parish where we are to be married, before we are married. I just ran down by the night train last night, took the fly, and met you; and shall make up my lost night by sleeping in town, for certainly I slept no where yesterday. Can't sleep in a train like mother; always feel too excited."

"I don't like those grand people," interrupted Netta pouting.

"You will know them directly. But don't let out any thing about the farm, or father and mother; papa and mamma now, little coz. Miss Simpson guesses it is an elopement I think, but I havn't told her so. They are very great friends of mine; very grand people."

"Quite like Lady Nugent, I suppose," suggests Netta.

"Quite—grander indeed. Well I have ordered the wedding-breakfast, carriages, every thing. Never had such fun in my life. It

was quite an excitement; you don't know half my talents yet,"

"Suppose brother Rowland were to hear of it?" says Netta frightened at the idea.

Howel laughs aloud, and awakes his mother.

"He is east, we are west, my dear cousin. He is amongst the plebeians, we the patricians; he is *canaille*, we are *noblesse*."

"What are they, Howel?"

"'Tis a pleasure to be hearing you talk, Howel," says Mrs. Jenkins yawning and rubbing her eyes.

"I was saying, mother, that we are to have a grand wedding, and you must take care not to let any thing come out about the shop, faugh! or, indeed, not talk much to the friends I have asked—Lady Simpson for instance."

"Oh, yes; you was telling me of her. Wasn't it when you was dining with Prince Albert wanst, and was wanting that money of my Griffey."

"Do hold your tongue, mother," shouts Howel, shuddering; he always shivers when he hears his father's name.

He sees a head trying to peep through the curtain, and thinks it best to hold his tongue for a time, then continues,

"I mean, mother, don't mention my dining with the Prince or any of those old stories to the Simpsons. You must both be very careful of what you say. I shall show you as much as I can of London to-morrow, mother, as you will be obliged to return the day after."

"Deet now, I did be thinking I should stay a week in London now I am going there for the first time in my life; I'll be staying after you, Howel bach. I've plenty of money now."

"You shall come up again to meet us when we return; but you must be at home to see to the house, and let us know what is said of our doings. You see we shall go direct to Paris, stay some time abroad, and then come and settle at home. Wont we astonish the county! Mr. and Mrs. Howel Jenkins will be no longer the Howel and Netta of old days; we shall be the fawned upon, not the fawners!"

"I'd scorn to fawn on anyone, Howel," says Netta, indignantly, "I never did in my

life. I always gave Miss Rice Rice as big a stare as she gave me."

"You will be able to give her a bigger now," laughs Howel.

As they journeyed on, Howel pointed out all the different objects that were likely to interest his mother and Netta. Everyone, or nearly everyone, knows what an exciting event is a first journey to London, it matters not whether performed at eighteen or sixty-five. And if the first journey to London be also the first journey by rail, the wonder and excitement are doubled.

When Howel had finished all his instructions concerning the future, he thoroughly entered into the present, and enchanted his companions by his general knowledge of the passing scenes, and the amusing stories he had to tell. Netta was more in love with him than ever before they reached town, and wondered that such a grand and clever gentleman could have kept constant to a little country cousin like herself. She had seen nothing of Howel during the most stirring years of his life, and could not have supposed what a change the mere com-

merce with the world could effect. She considered him far more agreeable than her brother Rowland, handsomer and more polished than Sir Hugh Pryse, and much more fashionable than Mr. Rice Rice.

At Swindon he treated them liberally, and loaded Netta with sweets to take with her to the carriage after she had swallowed her cold chicken and wine. As to his mother, knowing her peculiar tastes, he gave her a glass of brandy and water, upon plea of illness, which she took with evident pleasure; but fearing to attract the attention of the smart people around her, sipped so daintily, that it was not half finished when the signal to return to the carriages sounded, and Howel hurried her off.

"Just let me put this piece of chicken and ham into my bag, Howel, and finish this drop," she whispered.

"Quick, mother, not a minute," was all the answer she received, accompanied by a pull of the sleeve so imperative, that she was obliged to leave her half filled glass behind her.

At the Oxford Station, Netta began to wonder what Rowland would think of her conduct.

"Think!" said Howel with a scowling brow, "the prig! what right has he to think? He will know that three or four thousand a year are somewhat better than a London curacy—ha! ha! and wish himself in my place, I fancy."

As they neared London, Netta was haunted by visions of her brother, the only person she really feared.

"Suppose he should meet them! should find her out! suppose the clergyman who married them should guess, from her name, she was his sister, and go and tell him."

Howel laughed heartily at this, told her to look out of the window at London as they entered it, and see whether she thought one parson would be likely to be met by chance by another.

"This London!" exclaims Netta, "I see nothing but the roofs of a lot of ugly black houses!"

"Carmarthen is as fine, and Swansea finer!"

says Mrs. Jenkins, her face expressive of great disappointment.

"Draw down your veils, and stand there whilst I get a cab," says Howel, after they have descended upon the platform.

Netta trembles all over, and fancies every tall man in black must be Rowland.

"Name o' goodness what are all the people about?" says Mrs. Jenkins. "My deet, there do be a lot of carriages! And look you, Netta, at all the gentlemens' servants in blue and silver! Here's a place! big enough to hold our town. Look you at the glass—like a large hot-house. Seure all London isn't covered up like this!"

"Here you are! all right—come along, quick!" says Howel, taking them to a cab, and putting them in.

"Half Moon Street, Piccadilly," and off they go, as fast as the poor cab-horse can take them.

"Now what do you think of it, Netta?" asks Howel, as they drive through the magnificent streets and squares of the West End of London, where every house looks a palace.

Netta was so bewildered that she could not answer; but Mrs. Jenkins talked for both.

"Look you! well to be seure! that's grander than I ever see. There's a church! Trees too! Who'd be thinking of trees in London? Well, name o' goodness, where are all they people going. That church 'ont hold 'em all! There's beauty! Is that St. Paul's, Howel bach! or the Monument! My Griffey was talking of them! There's houses! Seure that's Prince Albert's coach! There again! Where was all those carriages going? Ach a fi! that man was just driving into our horse. Howel, name 'o goodness tell the coachman to tak' care. He'll be upsetting us. Yes indeet, Netta, there's shops! One after another. Did you be buying Netta's wedding clothes there, Howel! Is that a play-house! No! not a gentleman's house? I 'ould like to see a play for wanst if nobody 'ould tell our minister."

"If you are not too tired, I'll take you to-night, mother," here broke in Howel. "We may go, perhaps, after you have had some tea. What do you say, Netta?"

"Anywhere you like, Howel," said Netta,

"I am no more tired than if I was just starting."

"Pic what, Howel, was you calling this?" asked Mrs. Jenkins.

"Piccadilly, mother. One of the best parts of London."

"Deet, and I should think so. 'Tis like a 'lumination for lights. There's no night here. Daylight all the year round. Trees again, like Glanaravon Park, and lights along by. There's pretty! what a many carriages! Was they all going to the play? Soldiers, too, I am thinking! And more o' them gentlemens' servants in blue and white. Do all the servants in London be wearing the same livery, Howel?"

"Those are the police, mother," said Howel, laughing.

"The pleece! Well, I do be calling them handsome men. When will the noise stop, Howel! I can't hear myself speak, much less you and Netta. 'Tis more noise than Hollantide fair! But maybe 'tis fair-day here to-day, only I wasn't seeing no cattle. There for you! that man'll upset us, seure he will."

"Here we are, mother," interrupted Howel, as the cab stopped in Half Moon Street. "Now, you must remember that the landlady is not to be in all our secrets."

"Seure, and this isn't half as grand as Pic—what's that long name, Howel!"

"Will you walk up-stairs, Ma'am," said a well-dressed woman who stood in the passage of the house at which they stopped.

"Thank you, Ma'am," said Mrs. Jenkins, making her very best curtsey to the landlady.

"Is tea ready, Mrs. Thompson?" asked Howel, hastening into the passage.

"Yes, Sir!" replied Mrs. Thompson, trying to catch a glimpse of Netta's face."

"This way, mother;" said Howel, striding up-stairs. "You can send the traps into the bed-rooms, Mrs. Thompson. William, take them up."

This to a smart tiger, emblazoned in green and gold, belonging to Howel's private menagerie.

"What a lovely room! what a beautiful fire!" cried Netta, as she followed Howel into a handsome first-floor drawing-room.

"Treue for you there!" said Mrs. Jenkins, surveying herself in the glass.

Tea was ready, and a substantial repast besides, of which they all soon began to partake, and to which they did justice.

"I do wish I had that drop of brandy I left in those grand rooms, I am feeling a pain," began Mrs. Jenkins.

Howel drew a flask from his pocket, and poured a little brandy into his mother's tea.

"This must be the first and last time mother," he said as he did so.

When they had finished tea, Howel told them that their room was within the folding-doors, and that Netta would find a dress there for the play, and must make haste, if she meant to go. His mother, being in her very best black, wanted nothing but the widow's cap to complete her attire as chaperon. Howel lighted his cigar, and finished the brandy in the flask whilst the women were dressing. They soon returned, Netta looking really beautiful, in a new and fashionable white dress, elaborately trimmed with ribbons and lace.

Howel went up to her and kissed her with infinite satisfaction.

"Won't we create a sensation at the Olympic," he said. "There will not be such bright eyes, and lilies and roses to be seen there as yours, cousin Netta!"

"Mother don't approve of plays, Howel!"

"You must think of me, not mother now," said Howel, ringing the bell, and ordering a cab, which as soon as it arrived received our trio, and was driven to the Olympic, where they arrived in due time, and where we will leave them for the present.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MILLIONNAIRE'S WIFE.

"DON'T you be taking on so, Netta fach! if you do be crying this way, your eyes 'll be as red as carrots, and Howel 'ont like it."

"Oh! Aunt 'Lisbeth, I can't help thinking of mother, and how she is vexing about me."

"Look you at yourself in the glass, Netta fach! and you 'ont be vexing any more. I never was seeing such a glass as that before. Look you! you can see yourself from the beauty-flowers in the white bonnet—dear! there is a bonnet! and you was looking so well in it—down to them lovely white shoes on your foots, I never was thinking before you had such little foots."

This conversation takes place whilst Mrs. Jenkins is engaged in dressing Netta for her wedding, and in endeavouring at the same time to soothe various ebullitions of grief that burst out ever and anon, between the different acts of the attiring. The girl cannot quite forget the friends she left behind her, when she so suddenly ran away from home. The appeal to her personal appearance is not, however, in vain. She looks in the cheval-glass which draws forth Mrs. Jenkins' admiration, and thinks she has seldom seen anything so pretty as the reflection of her own person in her bridal-dress. She hastily dries her eyes, and turns round and round several times to assure herself that all is right.

"Ah! Howel is knowing everything!" says Mrs. Jenkins. "Silks and laces, and flowers, and worked-handkerchiefs, and all as white as a lily! And your cheeks a deal redder than any I do see here along! My deet! but you do be looking genteel."

"Do I look as if I had been crying, aunt?" asks Netta, wetting her eyes with lavender-

water. "I'm afraid of Howel and those grand people. I wish he hadn't asked them."

"Oh, for sham! Netta. There they are, I shouldn't wonder! Yes indeet!" says Mrs. Jenkins, "I hear them talking on the stairs."

A knock at the bed-room door, is followed by the entrance of two ladies, apparently mother and daughter; the former a portly and roseate dame, clad in the richest of brocades, and white lace shawls—the latter a thin and somewhat yellow damsel, attired in white and pink bonnet and mantle to match, evidently in bridesmaid's gear.

"Ah! how charming! how beautiful! what a country-flower in London leaves!" exclaim the ladies, rushing up to Netta, and kissing her. "Good morning, Mrs. Jenkins, your son has chosen a bewitching young person indeed!"

"Treue for your ladyship," says Mrs. Jenkins, making her very best curtsey, as the ladies alternately shake hands with her.

"Your ladyship" is no less a person than Lady Simpson, the wife of Sir John Simpson, Bart., a gentleman who acquired that title on an occasion when William the Fourth, of blessed me-

mory, was fêted in the city. Sir John, having made a considerable fortune in trade, and being blessed with a helpmate of an aspiring mind, has removed from his old neighbourhood to that of Hyde Park, where he is spending the money he earned, on the general advancement of his family. This family consists of a son and daughter, who have been highly educated according to the general acceptation of the term. With the son, Howel is very intimate, and through him, he has long been known to the rest of the family; but it is only since his vast accession of wealth that he has had the distinguished honour of claiming Sir John and Lady Simpson as his particular friends. To them he confided his intended marriage with a beautiful cousin, who, for family reasons, was coming to London, he said, under his mother's protection, to be united to him. They had called on Mrs. Jenkins and Netta the previous day, and were invited to the wedding in the various capacities of father, bridesman and bridesmaid. Previously to their making his mother's acquaintance, Howel informed them that being Welsh she naturally spoke the language of her country, and was so patriotic that

she disliked any other; and said that they must not be surprised at her peculiar English, which was simply a translation of the Welsh idioms into what, to her, was a foreign tongue. He also gave his mother an hour's lecture upon her dress and deportment; and Netta a few hints as to her general behaviour, which, whilst it enchanted the elder, frightened the younger lady. Thus "forewarned," if not "fore-armed" the forces of Simpson and Jenkins were thrown together.

Lady Simpson is an average specimen of a vulgar woman aping gentility; her daughter of a would-be fine lady.

After they have sufficiently admired Netta's dress, and put the finishing touches to it, Miss Simpson informs Netta of her duty as bride elect.

"Of course, my dear, papa will take you to the hymeneal altar, and our friend Captain Dancy will take me."

"Oh! I hope there is no other stranger," gasps Netta.

"Only a particular friend of my brother's and of Mr. Jenkins'. Do not be alarmed, you shy little dove."

"Netta fach!" whispers Mrs. Jenkins, "the ladies was knowing what is right."

"Then my brother must take up Mrs. Jenkins, and Mr. Jenkins, mamma. I declare we shall be a charming party; and remember to take off your glove, dear, and give it to me."

"We had better go down stairs now," said Lady Simpson. "Bridegrooms are very impatient at these times."

Lady Simpson took the blushing, frightened Netta by the hand, and led her into the drawing-room. Truly the poor child did look like a lovely country rose, as Miss Simpson had not inaptly called her. Howel led her, proud of her beauty, to the portly Sir John, who patted her kindly on the cheeks, and reminded Netta so strongly of her father that the tears sprung into her eyes. Howel's frown soon checked them, and a thundering knock at the door followed by the entrance of Mr. Simpson, junior, and his friend, Captain Dancy, turned her attention from the father to the son. The look of decided admiration that the new comers cast upon her, quite revived her drooping spirits, and she smiled, curtseyed and blushed as be-

comingly and naïvely as Howel could have wished.

Mr. Horatio Simpson was a young man very much adorned with chains, rings, studs, and black curls. He had, moreover, a very fine waistcoat, and was altogether well fitted by his tailor. His face was not unlike that of an otter. He used grand words when he spoke, but did not tire his companions by quite as voluble a tongue as did his mother. He was one of those fine gentlemen who would, or could neither plod nor dash at his studies, and who was quite willing to take all his knowledge second hand from any one who would kindly impart it.

Captain Dancy was so entirely his devoted friend, that he gladly gave him the advantage of his superior parts, in return for various favours which Miss Simpson also aids in conferring.

Captain Dancy is a tall, fashionable-looking man, with what Miss Simpson and her mamma consider a splendid figure. "And such a lovely moustache!" Miss Simpson usually adds with a sigh. The moustache and hair, are, however,

inclined to red, and the face within them is not unlike that of a fox. Perhaps some of his friends might be surprised if they found him in the present company; but he would do anything to oblige Simpson and Jenkins, who are, in turn, always at his service, in more ways than one.

After a little preliminary conversation, Mr. Simpson offers Netta his arm, and followed by the rest of the bridal party, leads the way down stairs. A smart little liveried page is at the door, and two fine carriages are in the street, each with its horses and coachman ornamented with bridal favours.

"We cannot make all our arrangements as I could wish," whispers Howel to Miss Simpson, "owing to circumstances; or I should have met you at the church from another house."

Netta, Mr. Simpson, and the two ladies are in the first carriage, which soon arrives at St. James's Church, followed by the other. How the bouquet in Netta's hand trembles, as she takes Mr. Simpson's arm, and walks with him up the steps, and finally through the centre

aisle to the altar! She has never been in a London church before, and the varied colours of that magnificent painted window strike her with wonder even now.

Netta turns very pale as she stands by the altar, and waits until Howel comes up. Sir John whispers some kindly words, which so forcibly remind her of her father, that she can scarcely repress her tears. She glances at Howel, as he stands opposite, gazing at her, and sees that his handsome face is calm and determined. He smiles as she looks at him, which reassures her. A prettier bride could never stand before an altar; Howel feels this, and is satisfied. And Netta has loved her cousin all her life, and thinks him perfect. She can truly say that she leaves father, mother, all for him.

And these are the feelings with which they receive the first words of the earnest-spoken, grey-haired priest, who tells them that they are assembled in the sight of God, to be joined indissolubly together.

Netta once read through the marriage service years ago. She had forgotten it, and would have read it again, but she did not take away either

her bible or prayer-book when she fled from her home, and did not like to ask Howel to buy her one. Now, as the clergyman continues his exhortation, the words sound to her as some solemn and wonderful address spoken for her alone. She listens in spite of a multitude of feelings that are struggling within her, and is struck with fear when she is adjured to confess, if there is any impediment to her being lawfully wedded. She knows that her father's anger and her mother's sorrow are broad impediments in her road to happiness.

Her hand trembles, as he who holds the office that offended father ought to hold, takes it and places it in that of the clergyman. It trembles still more as she hears the question put to her concerning her future conduct to him, so soon to be her husband, and to think she must audibly respond. Howel has already answered firmly, and boldly, and she strives to say the final, "I will," firmly, too; but her voice falters; she is too much absorbed in her own emotions to notice how carelessly and thoughtlessly Howel repeats his solemn promise to her after the clergyman, but she feels him

press her hand, and is re-assured. Tremblingly, but in all earnestness of purpose, she makes her vow to "love, cherish and obey" him whom she has resolutely chosen for her husband; and, as if touched by her manner, and by the searching glance of the clergyman, Howel becomes more serious, as he places the ring on her finger, and repeats the last words in those great and awful names, which it is sin to utter, but with humility and prayer.

Truly, as they kneel before the altar to receive the final blessing of the clergyman, they are a sight for much joy or much grief. Who shall say what the end will be! Two human beings joined in one to all eternity!

As that prayer and blessing is being spoken, a bright flash of lightning darts through the church, followed by a heavy peal of thunder; suddenly a great gloom fills the sacred edifice, and a storm of hail and rain dashes against the windows.

Poor Netta is superstitious, and as easily frightened as a child; she starts, and gives an involuntary little cry, as the lightning flashes before her eyes, and the thunder seems to shake

her as she kneels. She turns paler and paler as the storm continues, and can scarcely hear the concluding psalms, prayers, and exhortation, for her fear of the lightning which fitfully and at intervals slants through the painted windows.

Stronger nerves than Netta's have been shaken by a thunderstorm on a wedding-day. Even Howel involuntarily quails at this evil omen, and Mrs. Jenkins clasps her hands, and mutters a Welsh proverb. She and Netta had been congratulating each other on the sunshine of the morning, and such a storm was bad indeed.

However the service proceeds, and then, he who addresses the newly-married pair in God's name, makes himself heard in spite of the pattering hail. He seems the more impressive as he cannot but remark Howel's frowning brow, and Netta's agitation.

It is a relief to all the wedding party when the last words are spoken, and Howel leads his bride into the vestry. By this time, tears are running fast down her pale cheeks, and Howel's efforts at encouragement, and the

warm kiss he gives her, fail to dry them; Sir John Simpson's fatherly embrace, rather serves to increase than diminish the emotion, and poor Netta is conscious that Howel must be very displeased.

She mutters something about her great fear of lightning and thunder; signs her name even more stragglingly than usual, and is at last led by Howel through the church to the carriage.

"I don't wonder she is frightened and nervous," says Miss Simpson; "I am sure I should have fainted if such a storm had come on at my marriage. It is—"

"Nonsense!" exclaims Howel, somewhat rudely, as they drive quickly through Jermyn Street, up St. James's Street, down Piccadilly, and into Half Moon Street, without much farther conversation, whilst the storm rolls on. Netta hurries up-stairs, and gives way to a burst of sobs and tears; Howel follows, and knowing the best way to console her, takes her in his arms, and having told her that she is his own little wife now, begs her to remember all the grand things they are going to do.

"You are a great lady now, Netta. We

must astonish the little people down in Wales. Think of Paris, and that Lady Nugent, and Miss Rice Rice, and all your old rivals will hear of your being there, and soon see you return smarter and richer than any one."

"But the storm, cousin Howel! All those solemn words! I am frightened to death!"

"Silly little Netta! what has the storm to do with you and me? All our prosperity and happiness are beginning."

"But they say, 'Blessed is the bride the sun shines on,' and that thunder and lightning are such a bad omen."

"Don't be"—a fool, Howel was going to say, but he modified it into "Don't be such a silly little puss, but dry your eyes, and come and make yourself agreeable to our first visitors. *Ours*, Netta dear!"

Netta did as she was bid, and in a short time was at the head of the table, on which a wedding-breakfast had been duly placed, according to the general rules laid down for such occasions. Howel had given *carte blanche* to a fashionable confectioner, and everything was as it should be for the quiet and private marriage

of a man of large fortune. The cake was splendidly ornamented, the champagne iced, and the other viands and wines in keeping with them; the hired waiters vied with Sir John's servants in propriety of demeanour, and Howel's page was as pompous as pages generally are.

All Netta's pride and ambition returned when she saw herself mistress at a table more luxuriously spread than that of Mr. Gwynne, and she soon began to enjoy her new dignity very much.

"I am to have a French maid when I get to Paris," she said to Miss Simpson. "Howel does not like to take one with us, and we shall form our establishment when we return."

Howel laughed in his sleeve when he heard this; he managed to hear every word that Netta uttered, and gave her an approving glance; he also saw that his friends, Captain Dancy and Mr. Horatio Simpson, greatly admired his beautiful young wife, and little cousin Netta rose in his estimation.

"We shall soon meet in Paris, I hope," said Captain Dancy. "Simpson and I are going to run over next week. I should like to assist in showing you some of the lions, Mrs. Howel Jenkins."

"Lions! name o' goodness don't tak her to see them!" exclaims Mrs. Jenkins, now put off her guard by fear.

"Ah! you have not that Welsh figure; it means—" began Miss Simpson, but she was interrupted by Mr. Simpson proposing the health of the bride and bridegroom.

The breakfast went off very well, and the champagne went round only too often; ladies as well as gentlemen were flushed by this exhilirating beverage, and Mrs. Griffith Jenkins was beginning to be very voluble on the subject of "my son Howels," when that gentleman gave her a look that silenced her, and that reminded Netta that he had told her to look at Lady Simpson when it was time for her to put on her travelling-dress.

The ladies went to their retiring-room, whilst the gentlemen drank more champagne, and arranged various Parisian amusements.

It was understood that, as Howel had no friends to leave behind him for the final settlement of lodgings and the like, his guests were to depart before he and his bride left. They accordingly took their leave as soon as Netta re-

appeared in fashionable travelling costume. No sooner were they fairly gone than Howel set to work to pay and arrange; this done, he called Netta to look at their wedding-cards. There were a great number directed to different friends, some to acquaintances in their old neighbourhood and one to David Prothero, Esq., Glanaravon.

Netta quailed, but said nothing.

"Now let me read you this, Netta; it is for the 'Welshman,' and every one will read it:—'On the 16th instant, at St. James's Church, Piccadilly, London, Howel Jenkins, Esq., of our county, was married to Miss Prothero, daughter of D. Prothero, Esq., of Glanaravon. Sir John Simpson gave away the lovely bride, and the wedding-breakfast was attended by a select, but fashionable party of friends.'"

"Father will see that," said Netta; "he will be in such a passion."

"Serve him right," replied Howel, and called the page and sent the letters to the post.

The carriage was at the door, and the luggage in. Mrs. Griffith Jenkins was busily engaged in packing up the cake and a spare bottle of champagne, together with a few other confections, in a stray hamper.

"Make haste, mother," cried Howel.

"Stop you, Howel bach! in a minute. We must be wishing you joy at home; and I should like to be sending Cousin Prothero some of this grand cake."

At last Mrs. Jenkins and her hamper were ready, and the trio started for the Paddington Station.

When they arrived there Howel took a second-class ticket for his mother, as far as Swansea, telling her to take a first-class from that place home. She was to sleep with some friends at Swansea.

"We mustn't waste money, mother."

"Treue for you, Howel."

"Tell everybody at home of the grand wedding."

"Don't be afraid of that."

When Howel had seen his mother off, he and Netta drove to their station, and, per first-class carriage, with page in second, steamed off to Folkestone, which was to be the first stage of their life-journey.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SERVANT.

We must now leave Netta and her husband for a time, and return to the morning when Netta left her home to go forth in search of a new one.

The breakfast-table was spread at the farm, and all were assembled, except Netta.

"Owen, go and call Netta," said Mr. Prothero, seating himself before some smoking rashers of bacon; "she's always late, I'll say that for her."

Owen did his father's bidding, but returned, exclaiming—

"She is up and out of her room. There must be something wonderful to make her go out before breakfast."

"Such a lovely morning," said Mrs. Prothero, "I dare say she is in the garden."

"Well, let her find her way in," said the farmer; "she knows the hour, and we'll fall to. Say grace, mother, if you please."

Mrs. Prothero said grace, and the trio sat down to breakfast.

"I expect brother Jo and Mrs. Jonathan to-day," said Mr. Prothero; "they are going to a clerical meeting, and are coming here on their way back."

"Dear me!" said Mrs. Prothero. "What can we have for dinner?"

"Eggs and bacon. What better?" said the farmer. "But you needn't be afraid, they 'ont come till tea. Owen, I wish you'd just look out and see after that idle slut Netta."

Off started Owen with a piece of bread and butter in his hand.

"Mother, why don't you make that girl more regular?" asked Mr. Prothero.

"Oh, David! you know she doesn't mind me."

"Then you should make her."

Mrs. Prothero could have said, "You should

have helped me to make her all her life," but she refrained.

"Can't find her," cried Owen, returning.

"Perhaps she is ill up-stairs," suggested Mrs. Prothero, rising, and running up to her room.

The room was empty, as we know, and Mrs. Prothero was about to leave it again, when she went to the open window to see if she could espy Netta from it. She passed the dressing-table as she did so, and perceiving a letter, glanced at the direction. She was surprised to find it addressed to herself, and on a nearer examination saw that it was in Netta's hand-writing. It was with a trembling hand and foreboding heart that she took it up and broke the seal. After she had done this, she was some time before she could summon courage to open it. When she did so, her brain swam as she read the following words, written with trembling fingers :—

"Dear mother,

"I am going to marry cousin Howel. Father wont consent, so we are going to London to be married. I hope you will forgive me for not

telling you, but I knew it was no good, as father is so much against it. I am sure I shall be very happy, only I should like to have been married properly at home; but it is not my fault that father would not hear of it, and that Howel would not wait. We are going to France and a great many other countries, and it grieves me to think how long it will be before I shall see you again. I hope you and father will forgive me; as Howel is a gentleman with plenty of money, and we have loved one another all our lives, I don't see why we were not allowed to marry like any body else, instead of being obliged to go so far away; I am sure it would have been better if father had let us. Dear mother, you were always very good to me and I am sorry if I ever offended you, but father called me bad names, and was very cross; he will be vexed, perhaps, when he sees how grand and happy I am.

"Good-bye for a little time, my dear mother. Don't be very angry with your dutiful, affectionate daughter,

"JANETTA."

The word "dutiful" was scratched through and affectionate added.

When Mrs. Prothero had read this letter, she turned very pale, and stood like one in a dream; she could not realize the contents. That Netta was wilful and obstinate she knew, but she had never known her guilty of resolute disobedience; she felt very faint, and sat down on a chair opposite the open door—she tried to rise to go down stairs to her husband, but found that her head was too giddy, and she could not move; she put her hand before her eyes, and became unconscious.

At this moment Gladys passed down the passage, and seeing Mrs. Prothero in this strange attitude, went into the room and asked if anything was the matter; receiving no answer, she put her hand tenderly on Mrs. Prothero's, and removing it from before her face, saw that she was pale and appeared to have fainted. She ran hastily down stairs and finding Owen alone, told him that his mother was ill. He followed her up stairs, and soon perceived that Mrs. Prothero was really in a kind of swoon. Whilst he supported her, Gladys brought water and

such restoratives as she could procure; she begged him to go for his father, and whilst he was gone, succeeded in restoring Mrs. Prothero. At the sight of the open letter, however, she sank again into a fainting fit.

Mr. Prothero and Owen appeared.

"Mother, what is the matter? Name o' goodness what is the matter?" said Mr. Prothero in great alarm.

Gladys pointed out the letter to Owen, who glanced at it whilst his father took his wife into his strong arms.

Gladys put vinegar to her temples and nostrils, and begged Mr. Prothero to take her to the open window; as he did so he saw Owen reading a letter.

"How can you read now, you unnatural son?" he said sternly,

"Oh, father! father, Netta?" he exclaimed.

"Never mind her; think of your mother, ten thousand times as precious."

At last Gladys succeeded in restoring Mrs. Prothero to consciousness, and when she found herself in her husband's arms, with Owen bend-

ing over her, she burst into a flood of hysterical tears, which partially relieved her.

"Oh, Netta! Netta!" was all she could say, when they asked her what was the matter.

"Never mind her, mother, but get better," said Mr. Prothero, his usually rosy face almost as pale as his wife's.

"If you please, Sir, we will lay her on the bed," said Gladys.

"Not here—not here," gasped Mrs. Prothero.

They took her to her own room, and Gladys said,

"Perhaps, Sir, if you would leave her to me a little I could get her into bed, I am used to illness."

Mr. Prothero looked at the girl, and saw her eyes full of tears, but her face was calm and pale, and seemed to indicate a self-possession that no one else present had.

"I will come back again soon, mother," he said as he left the room, followed by Owen.

When they were gone, Mrs. Prothero gave way to an uncontrollable grief, and threw herself upon the neck of the girl, Gladys.

"What will he say? what will he do when he knows it all?" she sobbed.

"If you only hope and pray, Ma'am, perhaps all will be right that troubles you now," faltered Gladys.

"My only girl! to be so wilful, so disobedient!"

"May I ask what has happened to Miss Netta?"

"She has run away with her cousin, and her father will never forgive her—never!"

"Ah! that was what my poor mother did; but she was happy with my father; and Mr. Jenkins is rich and kind. Take comfort, Ma'am, it may not be so very bad."

Gladys managed to get Mrs. Prothero into bed, who, happily, did not see the effect produced by Netta's letter on her husband. Whilst she was shedding quiet tears on her pillow, he was raging with furious passion to his son; over and over again did he comment on every word of the letter, sometimes with keen irony, sometimes with a burst of rage, until Owen endeavoured to suggest pursuit,

"Go after her! the ungrateful, disobedient,

good-for-nothing hussey! No, not if she were stopping a mile off instead of whirling away in her grand coach and four nobody knows where. Let her go, the impertinent baggage! 'Father 'ont consent! father was very cross! father had better let us marry! he will be sorry when he sees how grand and happy I am! father called me bad names!' I wish I had called her worse! she deserves every name that was ever written!"

"But, perhaps," suggests Owen, "she will be happy, and Howel will be steady."

"Steady! hold your tongue and don't be a fool! Make a drunkard steady! make a bad son steady! make a gambler steady! make a horse-racer steady! make—make—make—hold your tongue, Sir: don't say a word for the ungrateful girl—never mention her name to me again—I never wish to see her face more as long as I live—I—I—I—"

Mr. Prothero's passion choked his words. Could Netta have suddenly returned and seen her father shaking with suppressed grief, his face crimson with rage, and his hands and teeth clenched, and her mother pale and weeping on her bed, she would, I think, have paused longer before she caused them this great grief.

Mr. Prothero returned to his wife before his passion was calmed. He found her sitting up in bed wringing her hands, and crying as if her heart would break.

"Now, mother, there's no good in this," began the farmer. "That girl don't deserve tears and lamentations, and I 'ont have 'em. We 'ont have the house turned upside down because a bad, obstinate, ungrateful daughter has run away with a miser's son, and a good-for-nothing spendthrift. Let 'em go, I say! I 'ould'nt stir a step to bring 'em back—"

"Oh, David! dear, dear husband! if only you will find out that they are married; if only you would send some one to see that Howel marries her! This is all—all—all! I will never name her again! I will try to forget her—I will do all you wish! but for my sake, for yours, for all, for God's sake, see to this, or I shall die."

Mr. Prothero was cowed at once by this passionate burst of grief. He had never seen his submissive, patient little wife excited in this way before, for never before had she felt so deep a pain. Her only daughter!

"God help me! God help me!" she sobbed, when she had controlled her great emotion. "I know I have indulged her—spoilt her perhaps. I know she is proud and wilful, and obstinate; but oh! to disobey us all—to go off, she doesn't know where—with Howel, too, who has no religion, nothing to keep him pure and honest—this is too much! too hard! No, David bach! it is no good to be angry now—if you won't go after her, I must."

"Stop you, mother, stop you! we'll see the slut married anyhow; that is to say, Howel shall marry her—who ever doubted that? but I'll never set eyes on her again as long as I live, I 'ont."

Whilst Mr. Prothero was speaking, Gladys, who had been waiting upon Mrs. Prothero until that moment, slipped out of the room, and ran in search of Owen. She found him amongst servants, making enquiries.

"Mr. Owen, may I speak with you if you please."

Owen followed her into the hall.

"Oh! Sir, if you would go after Miss Netta, now that the master is willing, at once; may be

you will save your mother's life. If she goes on this way, she will surely be very ill."

"What use would it be for me to go after her? The cow-boy saw her pass at about five this morning, and she is at Swansea by this time. My father ought to have let 'em marry, and get on together like other young couples."

"But, Mr. Owen, the mistress is afraid—she wants to be sure—she would be happier, Sir, if some one could see them married!"

"Oh! that's the way the wind blows! You may tell mother that I'll try to track them—but it won't be of any use. At any rate it will calm her to think we are making the attempt. You write to my brother Rowland, Gladys, and tell him of this affair; but the truth is, we must make the best of it. They are off to London to be married, and 'tis no good to try to look for 'em there."

Here Shanno entered.

"Mr. Owen, Mr. Jones, Tenewydd, did tell Mr. Thomas, Trefortyn, who did tell John, blacksmith, who did tell Betto, that he saw Miss Netta and Mrs. Jenkins, tallow-chandler,

'smorning about six o'clock, and they did get into a carriage by there."

"Go and tell mother that Aunt Jenkins was with Netta, Gladys, and I'll go and see whether Mr. Jones really saw her or not."

Gladys returned to her mistress, who had become more quiet, and was trying to persuade Mr. Prothero to go after the fugitives.

"Mr. Owen is gone, Ma'am," said Gladys, "and Mr. Jones of Tenewydd saw Miss Netta this morning with Mrs. Griffith Jenkins, and they got into a carriage together."

"Thank God that 'Lisbeth was with her," said Mrs. Prothero.

"The deceitful, pompous old vagabond," thundered Mr. Prothero. "She to connive and contrive! fit mother for such a son. They 'ont come to no good end. No, mother, I can't, nor I 'ont go after 'em, Netta; has made her own bed, and she must lie on it."

"Mr. Owen is gone, Ma'am," whispered Gladys. "Try to take comfort; there is one who can make all our rough ways straight, and will bring poor Miss Netta home again, if we pray for it."

"What's the girl preaching about?" said Mr. Prothero, glancing sternly at Gladys, who was silenced at once. "Now, mother, we mustn't let that undutiful girl upset us. I must go to the wheat-field—you must—" he looked at his wife, and changed what he was going to say to, "lie in bed."

"No, Davy, I can't lie in bed, I must go and look for Netta."

"Now, wife I 'ont have none of this nonsense. You must either lie in bed or go about your work. The whole house shan't be turned topsey-turvey for a baggage like that."

Mr. Prothero left the room, and his wife insisted upon getting up.

"If you could pray for her, Ma'am, you would be happier, and perhaps poor Miss Netta might be helped in a way we cannot see."

"Pray for me, Gladys, I cannot think or pray for myself, I am so bewildered."

The two earnest-minded women knelt down by the bed-side, and Gladys offered up a simple prayer in her clear, strong language, for the "poor lamb who had strayed from the fold;" in which

the mother joined in the midst of her sobs and tears. When they arose from their knees, Mrs. Prothero kissed Gladys, and said she would go down-stairs, and try to work, and seek to keep her heart in prayer.

And the day wore through, until the evening brought Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Prothero. For the first time, Mrs. Jonathan comforted her sister-in-law.

"Now, really, I do not see why you should be so very much distressed," she said. "Howel is a fine, clever young man, with plenty of money. He is sure to make his way into good society, and to place Netta in a superior position. Of course, it was very wrong of her to elope, very; but your husband is so obstinate that they knew he would never consent, and what else were they to do? I confess I should have done the very same thing. As to his not marrying her after all, that is absurd. He is devotedly attached to her, and he knows that with her beauty and spirit, she will soon be fit for good society."

Mr. Jonathan was not so successful with his brother. After saying that he had seen a car-

riage and pair pass at about six that morning, he proceeded to offer consolation.

"It is according to nature, brother. Since the creation, the man has cleaved to the woman and the woman to the man. You married according to your fancy, so did I; so have men and women ever since the world began. It may turn out better than you imagine."

"Brother Jo!" thundered the farmer, "hold your tongue. I know Howel better than you do, or anybody else, except Rowland. I 'ont hear any more about 'em, and the less you say the better. She's no daughter o' mine any more."

With this Mr. Prothero walked away, leaving his brother very much perplexed and distressed, but comforting himself with hoping that time would soften even his choleric relative.

Owen returned about ten o'clock. He had ridden to the inn where Howel had changed horses, and learnt the name of the house whence the fly came; had left his own horse and taken another, and gone on to Swansea, where he found from the drivers that the trio had gone direct to London. Thinking it useless to try to

track them farther, he returned, fully impressed with the wisdom of Howel in running off with what he couldn't get by fair means.

"Such a row as father makes," he soliloquized. "Why I should do the very same thing to-morrow. And Howel's a decent chap too; will be, at least, when he's sown a few more wild-oats. But if Netta doesn't lead him a dance I'm mistaken. She's father all over. There's a difference between her and that Irish girl. My wig! if she isn't a quiet one. But I never saw such eyes as hers in all my life, or such a sweet temper. I wonder what father would say if I ran off with her, and took her a voyage or two to give her a little more colour. That's all she wants to make her a downright angel."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE COLONEL.

THE next day, it was evident to everyon that Mrs. Prothero was very ill. She had never had any very extraordinary misfortunes or troubles; and the elopement of an only daughter was an event to her, so dreadful and unexpected, that it seemed as bad, or worse, than her death. As nothing more was to be gleaned concerning Netta, and further inquiries were literally useless; indeed, Mr. Prothero would not hear of their being made; Mrs. Prothero gave way to her grief, and her husband's most passionate demonstrations of displeasure failed to frighten her into her usual calm submission to him and his humours.

Owen paid a visit to Mrs. Jenkins' abode,

and heard, from the servant left in charge, that she was not expected home for some time. Owen bribed the woman to let him know when her mistress returned, and comforted his mother by assuring her that he would find out all about Netta from Aunt 'Lisbeth, whose tongue was too well oiled to stop going.

Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan offered to remain at the farm; but as they rather irritated Mr. Prothero by their evident inclination to take up the defence of the offenders, Owen told his aunt that she had better write to Lady Payne Perry about Netta, as there was always a chance of great people hearing the news. Owen was very well aware that his aunt could not possibly write to her aristocratic cousin with the pens, ink, and paper in general use at the farm, and that she would be obliged to go to her devonport at the Vicarage, where he already saw her in imagination, with the finest satin letter paper before her, mending her pen into the most delicate of points.

Accordingly they took their leave, with a promise to return on Monday, and were soon

succeeded by Miss Gwynne, who, having heard of the elopement, came to see Mrs. Prothero.

"If you could prevail on the mistress to go to bed, Ma'am," said Gladys, when she opened the door to her, "I would be for ever thankful to you, she is much too ill to be about, and she has done nothing but mope and fret all day."

Miss Gwynne went straight into the dairy, where Mrs. Prothero was making butter.

"So Netta has taken the law into her own hands, Mrs. Prothero. So much the better; I shouldn't grieve about it if I were you. It is a grand thing for her."

"Not to disobey us, and run away, Miss Gwynne; she would be better doing her father's bidding than marrying a Lord, much less Howel."

"But you are not going to make yourself ill and miserable about it. Since it is done, you may as well make the best of it; but you must go to bed and keep quiet, to-day at least. You are not fit to see all the people who are already on their way to condole or congratulate. You will have half the parish

here before night; I passed old Nancy, Cymriddle, hobbling down the lane, and she will be here shortly."

"Oh, I couldn't see them, Miss Gwynne."

"Then you must go to bed to avoid it. Do be advised; you look so ill."

When Miss Gwynne so far forgot herself as to be persuasive instead of commanding, she was irresistible. She put her hand so gently on Mrs. Prothero's shoulder, and looked so kindly into her tearful eyes, that the poor woman began to cry afresh. The sound of a stick knocking at the back door completed the victory, and Mrs. Prothero went sobbing up-stairs, whilst Gladys opened the door to admit Nancy, Cymriddle, and another gossip who had overtaken her. Mr. Prothero came into the yard at the same time.

"Well, Sir, to be sure; only to think of Miss Netta," began the old woman, in Welsh.

"If you're come here to talk about her, I'll thank you to go away again, and tell everybody you meet that they may have their nine days wonder about us anywhere but here,"

roared Mr. Prothero into Nancy's ear, who was very deaf.

The old crones, knowing Mr. Prothero well, turned away quicker than they came, and soon began to do his bidding, perceiving that he was in an "awful way."

"Mr. Prothero, do you know I have sent Mrs. Prothero to bed," began Miss Gwynne, advancing towards him, "she looks so very ill and unlike herself that I am sure you must be careful of her for a time."

"All that ungrateful, good-for-nothing daughter of ours, Miss Gwynne. What would she care if she were to kill her mother? I know you are a true lady, and a kind friend, Miss, and have more sense than all the rest of the country put together, so I don't mind telling you what I think. Those that disobey their parents 'll be seure to come to a bad end."

"We will hope the best, Mr. Prothero, and you must remember that you have your sons to comfort you."

"Fine comfort, to be seure. There's Owen as wild as an untrained colt, and Rowland such a grand man up in London that he 'ont know

his own father by-and-bye. Dining with bishops, and rectors, and as fine as my lord. I always told my wife that all Mrs. Jonathan's eddication was too much for us, and so it is turning out. We shall be left in our old age to shift for ourselves; one son at sea, without a shirt to his back; another preaching, upon a hundred a year—gentleman Rowland, as I call him; and the third in a work-house, maybe. And all this because brother Jo must needs bring a fine lady amongst us, and with her, nothing but grammar-schools, boarding-schools, and colleges. My wife always spoiled that girl."

"Perhaps you helped a little bit, Mr. Prothero," said Miss Gwynne, smiling, to stop the farmer's flow of words. "But one couldn't help spoiling poor—"

"There, don't you go for to take her part, Miss. Name o' goodness let alone the girl. Beg pardon for being so rude."

Here Gladys appeared, who had followed her mistress up-stairs.

"Sir, the mistress is very ill. I think she would like to see you. Perhaps you had better have a doctor."

"Never had a doctor in my house since Netta was born, that's the trouble she brought with her; I'd as soon have an undertaker. Send you for a doctor, and every body in the house is seure to be ill. He's infectious. Excuse me, Miss Gwynne, whilst I go and see what's the matter."

Miss Gwynne waited until she heard Mr. Prothero come down from his wife's room, calling busily for Owen, who was in the wheat-field, and telling him to go and fetch Doctor Richards. She then called Gladys, and said she should have whatever her mistress could fancy from the Park, and that she would come again in the afternoon and see how she was.

This done, Miss Gwynne went her own erratic way, which led her over stiles, and through fields, and into various cottages, where she alternately scolded, lectured, and condoled accordingly as she thought their inmates deserved the one or the other. She rarely left them, however, without giving some substantial proof of the interest she felt in their wants and trials, either by promises of food or clothing, or by money given then and there. She finally

anchored in a pretty school-house that she had lately prevailed on her father to build, close by the Park, where she found Miss Hall patiently superintending the needle-work of the girls. She gave two or three quick nods to the children, and they curtseyed and bowed on her entrance, and then told Miss Hall it was twelve o'clock and she had had quite enough teaching for one morning.

"I don't see what use it is having a school, if half the children are to stay away," she said to the mistress.

"It is the harvest, Ma'am; they stay at home to take care of the younger children; that is why we have so few."

"Yes, and half go to the Dissenting schools; I see them creeping out. Now, children," turning to the terrified urchins, who were just about to leave the room, "if I see any of you going to any other school but this, or going away from Church to the meeting-houses, you shall neither have new frocks, hats, nor shawls, nor shall you come to the tea-party I am going to give you soon; do you hear?"

"Yes, Ma'am—yes, Ma'am," muttered the

children as they curtseyed, and bowed, and slipped away.

As Freda and Miss Hall walked through the Park to the house, the former grew very excited in her manner.

"I tell you what it is, Nita," she said, "Lady Nugent is doing everything in her power to win papa, and as soon as Miss Nugent marries, or rather as soon as somebody marries her fortune, she will get papa to marry her, I am sure of it. She must propose for him herself, for he will never have the courage to do so; I see through her, and I am sure you must do the same. He is flattered by the constant attentions, and little notes, and insinuating manners of a very handsome, fashionable, agreeable woman; and she thinks Glanaravon Park and a man of fortune that she will be able to turn round her fingers, better than the jointure she will have to live upon when her daughter leaves her. I was actually disgusted with her yesterday; it was what I call a dead set; if he marries her I shall hang myself, for live with her I never will; I positively detest her."

"Oh! Feda! those are the old expressions,

of years gone by. But you are jumping at a conclusion."

"Not at all; papa always stands up for Lady Nugent and her insipid daughter. You know he is a thorough gentleman himself, and does not understand such a manœuvering woman. I told him so the other day, and he was quite angry; and I am sure she sets him against me. Why will you not try to marry papa, if he must marry again? and you are the only person I could tolerate for a step-mother."

"My dear Freda," said Miss Hall, laughing, "your papa would as soon think of Miss Rice Rice as of me."

"You are quite mistaken, he has always admired you very much, only you are so dreadfully reserved with him. You won't see that he wants some one who can talk to and for him, to save him the trouble. This, Lady Nugent does with the most contemptible tact; and does it so cleverly that nobody sees through her. If you will only try, and just propose at the right moment, I am convinced papa would have you. If he marries her, I say good-bye to Glanaravon for ever."

"You are so impetuous Freda, I am sure your papa has never thought of it."

"Not exactly in a downright way, nor will he till Lady Nugent makes the proposal; then he will be rather frightened at first, and finally think that she will head his table more gracefully than I shall, and be less dictatorial—and I shall go into a convent."

"Better marry yourself, my dear."

"Marry who? the only person who would really care to have me, whether I had a fortune or not, is Sir Hugh Pryse, and I could no more marry him than—than—Mr. Rice Rice, or Major Madox, who think only of the heiress of Glanaravon."

"But you have refused half a dozen more, and have not even taken the trouble to try to like any one of them!"

"They were all in love with the Park, not with me; and I certainly never mean to try to like any one. It must be true love with me or none at all. I shall die an old maid, and unless you will, just for my sake, try to cut out Lady Nugent, I daresay you and I will nurse the black cat together."

Freda's conversation was checked by the sound of horses' hoofs behind; she turned round and saw a gentleman riding slowly up the drive. He soon overtook them, and raising his hat, said,

"Miss Gwynne! I am sure it must be Miss Gwynne, am I right?"

Freda bowed.

"You do not remember me! twelve years make a great difference! and you were a child when I left."

"Colonel Vaughan! Oh! I am so glad to see you!" exclaimed Freda. "And papa will be charmed; we heard you were in England, but did not know you were in this county."

Colonel Vaughan dismounted, and shook hands with Freda, evidently with all his heart, then glancing at Miss Hall, started and said,

"Yes—no—I beg your pardon, surely not Miss Hall."

"Yes," said Miss Hall, colouring slightly, and holding out her hand, "I am very glad to welcome you home again, but can well imagine you did not expect to see me here."

By this time they were at the house, and

Freda was planning introducing Colonel Vaughan to her father as a stranger, and seeing whether he would recognize him or not.

She accordingly preceded him to the study, and said to Mr. Gwynne, "A gentleman wishes to see you, papa."

Mr. Gwynne rose and made his bow, and motioned to a seat in his usually nervous manner.

"How do you do, Mr. Gwynne? don't you know me?" said the Colonel, standing up before him.

"I beg your pardon—no—I do not think I have ever—impossible! It cannot be my godson, Gwynne Vaughan."

"The very same!" said the Colonel, "I only came down last night, and this is the first place I have visited."

"I am very glad to see you, my dear fellow," said Mr. Gwynne absolutely rising from his chair.

"And this was what the bells were ringing for last night," said Freda, looking flushed and handsome.

"In spite of my poverty they did me that

honour," said the Colonel. "I heard the old place was likely to be let again, and so ran down to have a look at it first, and beat up my old friends. It was years ago that I went, a youth of nineteen, into the army, and twelve since I have been here, and I have been all the world over since then; but I come back and find everything much as I left it."

"But surely you will not go away again?" said Mr. Gwynne.

"I am not rich enough to keep up the old place as it ought to be kept, and the debts are not half wiped off yet; so I don't mean to settle down at present."

"But a little economy, and that sort of thing would soon clear the Park. You had better settle down."

"I don't think I should like it; besides I hear there are negotiations going on between my attorneys and some other persons for a fresh tenant."

The luncheon-bell rang, and the party went into the dining-room; and whilst they are eating and talking, we will examine the new comer.

He is decidedly a handsome man. The most fastidious judge of masculine beauty could scarcely deny this fact. Tall, well made, of commanding figure and aristocratic appearance, black hair, a high rather than a broad forehead, well marked eye-brows, and black lashes so long that they half conceal the grey eyes beneath; an aquiline nose, and a well defined mouth, with an expression slightly sarcastic; a chin so deeply indented with a dimple that if the old saw be true, he must be a flirt or a deceiver; and withal, a manner so perfectly easy and self-possessed, that you say at once, court, camp or cottage must be equally accessible to that man.

There is a certain power in him, that even a reader of character would scarcely understand for some time. Is it intellect? There is decidedly intelligence in the face, yet it is not highly intellectual; there are no disfiguring lines and cross lines, the furrows of study or thought. Is it mere health and animal spirits? He is neither particularly rosy nor overpoweringly cheerful. Does he read your mind at a glance? His eyes are penetrating, but not un-

comfortably so. It is, we are inclined to think, that general and instinctive knowledge of the characters and tendencies of those with whom he converses, which commerce with the world, and a keen observation of men and manners, alone can give. He is, in short, a man of the world.

When he first entered the army, his father and an elder brother were alive. They, dying about three years after, left him in possession of a large but greatly encumbered property. It was estimated that it would take twenty years at least to clear the estate, and that, only by letting it, and never drawing upon the proceeds.

The young heir was wise enough to retain his post as officer in Her Majesty's service, though not to sequester all his income for the payment of his father's, grandfather's, and great grandfather's debts or mortgages. He spent about a fourth of it annually, and consequently the property was still greatly encumbered, and he knew that to reside on it and clear it, he would be obliged to live in a very humdrum style, or else add to the burden of debt already incurred.

He preferred remaining in the army, and being a general favourite in society, and having no near relations in Wales, it never occurred to him to spend his furloughs in his native county. He had always some distant land to visit, and either with his regiment, or on leave, had travelled nearly all over the world.

His return was, therefore, an event of considerable interest to the neighbourhood in which his place and property lay; and, doubtless, Mr. Gwynne was not the only person who wished Colonel Vaughan to settle at Plas Abertewey.

When he was last at Glanaravon Park, Mrs. Gwynne was alive, Freda was a child of eight, and Miss Hall, a very elegant and pretty young woman. Mr. Gwynne Vaughan was then one of her numerous admirers; but there was apparently no remnant of his early passion left, if you can judge of the heart of a man or his character, at least, by his face or manner. Miss Hall was much more confused when she suddenly met him, than he was when he first recognized her.

Freda had always had a pleasant recollection

of him. He had been been very kind to her when she was a child, and an occasional letter to her father, or the intelligence, through the papers, of his distinguishing himself in India or his gradual rise in the army, had kept alive a certain amount of interest in her mind for this old friend.

She showed it at once, and delighted Colonel Vaughan by the perfectly natural manner with which she welcomed him, and the frank heartiness of her expressed wish that he should remain in the country now he had returned to it.

"We have never had any one we cared for at Abertewey," she said. "Sometimes it was an English family who came to ruin themselves in mining speculations; sometimes a sporting man who came for the hunting, shooting and fishing; and now, if you don't stay, I daresay it will be a Manchester Mill owner, or some such person."

"Much nearer home, I fancy; but I believe it is a kind of secret, only I am so much like a woman that I cannot keep a secret. To my utter astonishment, I find it is to be a son of old

Jenkins, the miser! I remember the father, but the son was some years my junior. You need not mention this, however, as it may fall to the ground. He wanted to buy the place, but I am too patriotic still to wish to sell."

"Howel Jenkins! little Netta! at Abertewey!" exclaimed the trio in concert.

"True it is that mountains fall and mushrooms rise," said the Colonel laughing. "But he has money, and as far as negociations have gone, seems willing to pay, so I am content."

"And I am not," said Freda. "It will be odious; and I shall be so sorry for poor Mrs. Prothero. You must settle there yourself, Colonel Vaughan."

"A poor lonely bachelor with no money!"

"Hem—hem, you might find a wife I should think," suggested Mr. Gwynne. "There is a beautiful girl in this neighbourhood with thirty thousand pounds at her disposal."

"Oh, papa!" said Freda frowning perceptibly, "such an empty headed, insipid girl would be dear at a hundred thousand."

Colonel Vaughan looked at Freda to see

whether she was jealous, but could not quite understand the frown.

Soon after luncheon he took his leave, with promises to make Glanaravon his head-quarters if he remained any time in the country.

END OF VOL. I.

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